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AND THE INDIAN FEDERATION: THE CASES
OF BOMBAY AND THE PUNJAB.**

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LINGUISTIC STATES AND THE INDIAN FEDERATION
THE CASES OF BOMBAY AND THE PUNJAB

by

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ABSTRACT

Linguistic regionalism, one of several divisive forces operating in Indian society, has been the basis of a campaign, begun long before Independence, to make each state in the federation unilingual. In Bombay and the Punjab, the campaigns were protracted when the Reorganization of 1956 failed to satisfy linguistic demands in these states.

The thesis examines the general background to the linguistic states idea, and traces in detail the history and nature of the linguistic campaigns in Bombay and the Punjab. It relates these campaigns to certain characteristics of the Indian political process, and weighs the good and bad effects of linguistic states on India as a whole.

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INTRODUCTION

The most remarkable feature of the Indian political system is the diversity of the elements that participate in it, and its ability to survive the disruptive forces they express. A study of Indian politics must therefore include an understanding of how these forces are accommodated, and how the structure and operation of the political system is affected by them. This understanding must in turn derive from an examination of the forces themselves. One of the forces requiring such an examination - linguistic regionalism - is the subject of the following thesis.

No state encompassing 460 million people in a land of widely contrasting geographic and climatic conditions can expect to have a particularly homogeneous population, but the cleavages in Indian society are too numerous, too deep, to be explained only by the physical factors of terrain, climate, sheer bulk of population, and economic underdevelopment. Rather, these cleavages are derived from a history five thousand years long, and are products of the very mainsprings of social action: language, religion, and, unique to India, caste.

Language, religion, and caste are potent social forces because they combine to appoint every Indian individual, without exception, to

his role in Indian society. They can be dangerous forces not to the society itself so much as to the administration that is trying to govern that society, as one nation, with a centralised federal system. A good deal of the political activity aimed at influencing or destroying this central authority has involved ostensibly secular political organisations which have, as their true basis of support, linguistic, caste, and communal loyalties. So far, the centre has managed to withstand such activity (to a large extent by employing the same technique): it has been influenced, but it has not collapsed.

The most disruptive religious cleavage, between Hindus and Muslims, was partially solved by the Partition of 1947. The huge Muslim minority was displaced and its major political organisation, the Muslim League, has all but disappeared from the Indian political scene. There are still forty million Muslims in India, as well as more or less politically active communities of Jains, Parsees, Buddhists, Christians, and Sikhs. The last of these, as we shall see, has played a particularly active role in Indian politics.

Caste is a system so deeply woven into the Indian social fabric that it is impossible to discern any pattern, particularly a political one, that does not consist partially of its threads. The new social pressures working against caste, such as industrialisation, urbanisation, and the legislative efforts of the government, have

tended to break down its more extreme practices and modes of expression. At the same time, as a very effective locus of group loyalty, the caste system has become deeply entrenched in politics, and has thus been fortified.

The final disruptive force, language, has been evident in two separate issues: the quest for a national language, and the development of linguistic regionalism. The first issue has placed the Dravidian language areas (the four southern states), especially Madras, in opposition to the attempt to establish Hindi, a northern tongue, as an all-India language. The issue has produced a generalised North versus South alignment which involves economic and cultural, as well as linguistic, implications. It is still in the process of resolution. The other issue, linguistic regionalism, is a much less tidy one. It entails more particularist demands that originate in several parts of the country but are all directed against the central government. These demands may vary in style and content, but their goal has been consistent: the division of the Indian federation into unilingual states.

Although this issue is still alive in certain states, it has been resolved to the extent that it no longer involves the central government. Most of the demands for linguistic states have been fulfilled, but the forces of religion and caste, that were often behind the linguistic demands, are still active. And the creation of linguistic states may not

after all represent the final solution. The general tension between the centre and the federal units, that exists in any federal system, may have been enhanced by the social consolidation the states have experienced on becoming unilingual. The central government may thus find itself subject to stronger, more articulate, regional pressure because it chose to fulfill, rather than reject, linguistic demands. If this is the case, it may see its cause of national unity (which, with the secular state and economic development, is the prime ingredient of Congress domestic policy) irretrievably harmed. On the other hand, the government may have assessed the clamor for linguistic states to be so strong that it decided to risk its long run aims of unity in order to alleviate the immediate strains on the federation.

These speculations on the eventual consequences of the reorganisation of India into linguistic states form the background to the specific subject of this thesis: the campaigns, directed against the federal government, for the bifurcation of Bombay into states representing the Gujarati and Marathi languages, and of the Punjab into states representing Punjabi and Hindi. The thesis proposes to examine: why the campaign for linguistic states was successful in Bombay but a failure in the Punjab; the nature of the campaigns, including their techniques, their participants, and their leadership; and the relationship of the campaigns to the political process of the re-

gions directly involved and of the country as a whole. More generally, of course, the thesis will attempt to evaluate the linguistic principle of federation and consider its effects on the political viability of the Indian union.

The idea of linguistic states is not a new one, and can be found expressed throughout the political history of India's colonial era, especially at those times the constitution was undergoing review or reform. The first chapter of the thesis will outline the development and application of the linguistic states idea up to 1947, its relative prominence during the sessions of the Constituent Assembly, and its place in the Republican constitution of 1950. The same chapter will review the establishment of Andhra Pradesh, considered to be the first state founded on the linguistic principle, and of the States Reorganisation Commission. Chapters Two and Three will then portray in some detail the history of the campaigns for unilingual states in Bombay and the Punjab. Chapter Four will analyse and compare these campaigns, and Chapter Five will draw conclusions on the effect of linguistic states on India as a whole.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BACKGROUND TO LINGUISTIC FEDERALISM 1900-1956

At the beginning of this century, most of the Indian subcontinent was under the direct control of Great Britain, as represented by its Viceroy. The remainder was ruled by princes, whose states varied in size from a few acres to hundreds of square miles. The political affairs of each "native state" were regulated by its British resident, who was directly responsible to the Viceroy.

In 1900, British India¹ consisted of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Bombay, Punjab, Madras, Central Provinces, United Provinces, and Northwest Frontier Province, plus the islands and smaller provinces. The physical task of administering this huge and sprawling realm called for some form of decentralisation. The degree of decentralisation, and its form, was the concern of every attempt to revise India's constitution up to, and including, that of the Constituent Assembly in 1948. As early as the 1920's, these constitutional revisions were moving towards federalism, and the question of drawing the federal boundaries consequently arose. The early British solutions to this question were founded on administrative convenience and efficiency, with the result that the artificial boundaries inherited from the East India Company and the various

1. For a map of the political divisions of pre-Independence India see Percival Spear, India, A Modern History, (Ann Arbor, 1961), p. 378.

Indian wars, were kept intact. These boundaries, thus reflecting the extent of the impact of the colonial powers on India, became the target of the nascent nationalist movement: its first violent anti-British campaign was concerning the boundaries of Bengal in 1905.

In 1905 Lord Curzon, the Viceroy, decided to divide the Bengal Presidency (which then included the modern states of Bihar, Orissa, Assam, and East and West Bengal), and termed the partition "a mere readjustment of administrative boundaries."¹ But the new line divided Muslim from Hindu, and the Bengalis in the western portion found themselves a linguistic minority in a state dominated by Biharis and Oriyas. Agitation was launched on the grounds that all Bengalis should remain united in their own motherland,² and the campaign received national support from Congress. (The Bengal issue was instrumental in the Extremist-Moderate split in Congress in 1907).³ Finally, Lord Hardinge, Lord Curzon's successor, reunited Bengal in 1911, and created a new province out of Bihar and Orissa. Popular agitation over a linguistic/cultural boundary had been given its first test as a political force, and reunited Bengal symbolised its success.

1. Quoted in Spear, op. cit., p. 318.

2. D. R. Gadgil, Federating India, (Poona, 1945), p. 9.

3. B. P. Sitaramayya, The History of the Indian National Congress, Vol. I (1885-1935), (Bombay, 1935), pp. 96-97.

British concern for revising the structure of her administration of India was expressed privately in 1917 by Lionel Curtis,¹ and publicly a year later in the Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, the Montagu-Chelmsford Report. During a visit to India, Curtis advocated effective local government as the first step towards responsible government for the whole country, and he claimed that the provinces should be broken down into about twenty-four states of ten million people each. These states would constitute "historic areas", but "unity of language and religion are also important factors, and language is the most important of all." Anticipating the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, Curtis also proposed that English should be replaced by the vernacular in the local councils, in order to make it "possible for public business to be discussed in a language which all the legislators can speak with ease, and which the largest possible number of electors can understand."²

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report was mainly concerned with decentralisation, and with "giving the provinces a real measure of

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1. Curtis was an early proponent of a "modern" British Empire. See the Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol. III, (Cambridge, 1959), p. 405.
 2. See Lionel Curtis, Letters to the People of India on Responsible Government, (London, 1918), pp. 64-71. Also Appendix I for a linguistic scheme of federation, proposed by P. C. Mitter.

constitutional liberty of action."¹ But the Report was unwilling to recommend devolution of power to governments below the provincial level, partly because this would involve dividing the provinces up, and "provincial patriotism (is) strenuously jealous of its territorial integrity."² The Report did recognise "the artificial and often inconvenient character of existing administrative units," and admitted smaller, more homogeneous, areas would be simpler to govern, but decided nevertheless that constitutional reform would have to precede redistribution, except "wherever such redistributions are necessary and can be effected by process of consent." Like Curtis, the Report believed that redistribution on a linguistic basis would allow government business to be carried out in the vernacular, and "would contribute to draw into the arena of public affairs men who were not acquainted with English."³

The changes that were brought about on the basis of the recommendations of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report were in turn examined by the Reforms Inquiry Committee,⁴ established by the Labour

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1. Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms, 1918. (Cmd. 9109), (Montagu-Chelmsford Report), p. 3. Montagu was the Secretary of State for India, and Chelmsford the Governor-General.
 2. Ibid., p. 158.
 3. Ibid., p. 159.
 4. Report of the Reforms Enquiry Committee, 1924. (Cmd. 2360).

government in 1924. This committee's report mentioned that one of the obstacles preventing implementation of the 1919 reforms was the lack of linguistic unity in some of the provinces.¹

In these English commentaries, the linguistic redistribution issue was peripheral to the problem of constitutional change. Of much greater significance, therefore, was the decision taken by the Indian National Congress, at its 1920 Annual Session at Nagpur, to divide British India into twenty pradesh, or provincial, Congress Committees.² The boundaries for this division were based on language, in order that each Pradesh Committee would be unilingual. Congress, which under Gandhi had been transformed from a pressure group seeking reforms to a mass movement demanding self-government, was now organising at the regional level, where it hoped to enlist mass support.

The demand for linguistic committees had first intruded into Congress affairs in 1908, when the party recognised Bihar as separate from Bengal. In 1913, there was a movement within the Madras Committee for a separate branch for the Telegu-speaking regions. This issue was raised in the 1916 Lucknow Session, and passed by the All-India Congress Committee to the 1917 Calcutta Session, where the split was endorsed, in spite of opposition from the Congress president,

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1. Report of the Reforms Enquiry Committee, 1924. (Cmd. 2360), pp. 49-51.
 2. The twenty pradeshes, and the language spoken in each, are listed in Article VI(a) of the 1920 Constitution of the INC, reproduced in Reginald Coupland, Indian Politics 1936-1942, (London, 1943), Appendix I, p. 314.

Annie Besant. In October of the same year, Congress separated Sind from the Bombay Committee.¹ Finally, the adoption in 1920 of unilingual provincial committees was the result of Congress' new image of a mass movement. Nehru recalled, in 1938, that once the party began to work in the language of the provinces, it "developed contacts with the masses rapidly, and the strength and prestige of Congress increased all over the country."²

Although the purpose of establishing unilingual committees was to strengthen the nationalist movement, the impression remained that Congress had officially endorsed the principle of linguistic states. This impression was sustained by repeated allusions by nationalist leaders to the need for equating provincial and linguistic boundaries.³ Congress was quickly accused of treachery when it came to power in 1947 and denied having pledged to divide the country up along linguistic boundaries.⁴

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1. Sitaramayya, op. cit., pp. 147-148. Sitaramayya was active himself at these Congress sessions, promoting the cause for a separate Andhra committee. The linguistic reorganisation was opposed by Congress leaders from the North, including Gandhi. See Selig Harrison, India, The Most Dangerous Decades, (Princeton, 1960), pp. 276-277.
 2. Jawaharlal Nehru, The Unity of India, (New York, 1942), p. 243.
 3. "...my frequent references to linguistic areas and the language of the province necessitate that provincial units should correspond with such linguistic areas". Ibid., p. 259. See also D. K. Hingorani, "The Role of Languages in the Development of National Consciousness in India", Publications of the Modern Language Association, April, 1957, p. 34.
 4. For example, see the speech by S. K. Patil quoted in Times of India, October 6, 1953, p. 1.

The seeds of regionalism sown by Congress in 1920 were not left unnurtured. In 1925, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, challenged Congress to produce a constitution that would satisfy popular demands,¹ and the response came in a report prepared for the All-Parties Conference² by a committee under Motilal Nehru. It was a moderate response, considering the rising movement within Congress for complete independence,³ and asked only for Dominion status within the Empire. But regarding the distribution of the provinces, the Nehru Report said that "the main consideration must be the wishes of the people and the linguistic unity of the area concerned."⁴ At the same time, the Indian Statutory Commission (the Simon Commission) was in the country enquiring into the problems of constitutional change, but Congress was less concerned with its mission than with protesting its all-British composition.⁵ The Simon Commission's report, published in 1930, marked the first time a federal constitution

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1. Smith, op. cit., p. 373.
 2. The Conference included the INC, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Sikh League. It met in 1928, and was formed on the initiative of Congress.
 3. For relations between the Conference and Congress, see Jawaharlal Nehru, Toward Freedom, (Boston, 1958), pp. 129-131.
 4. From "Report of the Committee appointed to determine the principles of the Constitution of India", (The Motilal Nehru Report), quoted in Indian Press Digests, (Berkeley, 1956), Volume II, No. 2, p. 61.
 5. See Nehru, Toward Freedom, pp. 131-132, 134. The Simon Commission recognised this grievance and offered a solution. Report of the Indian Statutory Commission 1930, (Cmd. 3568), I, p. 4.

was seriously considered for India:¹

It inevitably follows that the ultimate constitution for India must be federal... for it is only in a federal constitution that units differing so widely in constitution as the provinces and the states can be brought together while retaining internal autonomy.²

The Report also recognised that the current administrative divisions were "haphazard..., the result of conquest, supersession of former rulers, or administrative convenience." It was necessary to re-settle "the provincial boundaries of India at as early a date as possible."³ Referring to the Nehru Report, the Simon Commission agreed that "the use of a common speech is a strong and natural basis for provincial individuality," but that factors of race, geography, and religion must also be considered. Specifically, it recommended the separation of Orissa from Bihar, and of Sind from Bombay, citing the former case as "a glaring example of the artificiality of areas which are not naturally related."⁴ In sum, the Simon Commission gave regionalism a definite, if academic, stamp of approval.

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1. "The Montagu-Chelmsford Report had only alluded to the possibility of Federation, and the recent Nehru Report had not gone much further. The Simon Report, on the other hand, assumed that federation was the only practicable form of government for all India, and urged that the constitutional machinery should be at once adjusted to fit into a future federation." Reginald Coupland, India: A Re-statement, (London, 1945), p. 133.
 2. Report of the Indian Statutory Commission 1930, (Cmd. 3568-69), Vol. II, p. 13.
 3. Ibid., p. 15.
 4. Ibid., pp. 24-25.

In 1930 Congress declared its objective of complete independence, and the nationalist movement entered a phase of intense and widespread activity, recruiting thousands into its non-violent civil disobedience campaigns under Gandhi's leadership. Linguistic agitation, and even constitutional reform, were overshadowed by the drive for freedom. Then, in 1935, the recommendations of the Simon Commission emerged in the new Government of India Act.¹ Sind and Orissa were recognised as separate units, and the provinces received more autonomy, but there was no readjustment of provincial boundaries. It was a federal constitution in design, but its federal character was considerably weakened by the refusal of the princely states to participate. The nationalists objected to the fact they were given power in the provinces but not at the centre,² but Congress decided to enter the 1936 elections in spite of opposition within its ranks. It won control of eight provincial assemblies. It was in these assemblies that the linguistic issue was kept alive,³ but on the whole it was submerged in the final struggle towards independence.

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1. The Act is summarised in Coupland, Indian Politics, p. vii. See also W. H. Morris-Jones, Parliament in India, (London, 1957), p. 17.
 2. Nehru, in Unity of India, p. 107, said the Act emphasized provincialism and "diverted our anti-imperialist struggle into narrower channels." Also, Shri Ram Sharma, A Constitutional History of India (1765 to 1948), (Bombay, 1949), p. 220.
 3. Especially in the Bombay and Madras legislatures. See Marshall Windmiller, "Linguistic Regionalism in India", Pacific Affairs, December 1954, p. 297.

Once this was achieved, in 1947, Congress' charge that regional demands detracted from the force of the demand for freedom could no longer be laid. Instead, such demands were labelled as damaging to the new cause of national unity. But now the voice of regionalism had a forum: first the Constituent Assembly, and later the legislatures of the Union and State governments. And Independence had vested that voice with a new tone, a new goal: political power.

The Constituent Assembly was primarily concerned with finding a means for holding the country together rather than a basis for dividing it into states. The strongest claim for regional autonomy, the Muslims', was withdrawn when the subcontinent was partitioned into two sovereign nations. The first draft constitution, placed before the Assembly in February 1948, thus provided for a strong central government. This by no means precluded the possibility of linguistic boundaries for the states, and to help the Assembly deal with this question¹ the Constitution Drafting Committee appointed a three man Linguistic Provinces Commission (the Dar Commission) to examine the "administrative, financial, and other consequences" of creating separate states in the Telegu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Marathi speaking areas.

1. For a summary of the linguistic states issue in the Constituent Assembly, see Joan Bondurant, Regionalism versus Provincialism, (Berkeley, 1958), pp. 24-25.

These restrictions on the scope of its enquiry did not prevent the Commission's report, released in December 1948, from presenting a general review of the linguistic states principle. It said that the highest priority must be given to Indian national unity, that linguistic states would constitute an obstacle to the growth of that unity, and as such could not be tolerated. They would, it stated, form "sub-nations", and "nationalism and sub-nationalism are two emotional responses which grow at the expense of each other... In a conflict between the two, the nascent nationalism is sure to lose ground and will ultimately be submerged."¹ The Commission also feared that the creation of linguistic states would engender bitterness and parochialism, and foster intolerance of minorities not speaking the language of the state.² Within its specific terms of reference, the Dar Commission believed the proposed states would be weak, relying on the central government for financial and economic support. Finally, it allowed that, once India's "nascent nationalism" became sufficiently strong, new boundaries based on the criteria of geography, economic strength, and popular consent, could be considered.

The Dar Commission seemed to crush all immediate prospects of reorganising the unborn republic along linguistic lines, and

1. Quoted in Indian Press Digests, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 63.

2. See Bondurant, op. cit., p. 26.

the reaction was hostile, especially in the southern regions directly affected by the Commission's findings. The Commission itself admitted that "on account of Congress pledges the demand (for linguistic states) has got deep down into the masses, and its postponement is creating bitterness, impatience, and frustration."¹ Congress was not unaware of these sentiments, and the official party reaction, at its Jaipur Session in December, 1948, was the appointment of its own Linguistic Provinces Committee, "to examine the question in the light of the decisions taken by Congress in the past, and the requirements of the existing situation," and to reconsider the conclusions of the Dar Commission.²

The JVP Committee, as it was called,³ submitted its report in April, 1949. It was only slightly more favourable towards the linguistic principle than the Dar Commission, but, unlike the Dar Commission, it gave positive encouragement to the campaign in Madras for a separate Telegu-speaking state. It pointed out that the situation had changed since Congress established the linguistic principle in 1920: "the present is not an opportune time for the formation of new provinces. It would let loose, while we are still in a formative state, forces of

1. Quoted in Bondurant, op. cit., p. 26.

2. Ibid., p. 28.

3. So named because it was headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, and Pattabhi Sitaramayya.

disruption and disintegration."¹ In spite of this, the JVP Committee conceded, with explicit reservations, the case for the creation of Andhra Pradesh, since the necessary conditions of popular consent and geographical contiguity seemed to be fulfilled. Otherwise, Congress leadership was primarily concerned with "security, unity, and economic prosperity," and was willing to alienate some of its provincial supporters rather than accede to their disruptive demands.²

In 1950, India adopted its lengthy Republican constitution, the product of two and a half years' deliberation in the Constituent Assembly. The Assembly debated the linguistic principle several times, and B. N. Rau, one of the eminent constitutionalists advising the Assembly, recognised that "one of the most difficult problems ... will be to satisfy the demand for linguistic provinces, and other demands of a like nature, without creating a large number of new provinces."³

The Dar Commission had declared immediate reorganisation of the country was impossible, and the Constituent Assembly had

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1. Quoted in Windmiller, "Linguistic Regionalism in India", p. 298.
 2. The two Language committees "shattered the faith of the rank and file in Congress." Congress legislators in the Bombay Assembly resigned from the party when the JVP Committee failed to support their demands for a separate Kannada-speaking state. Times of India, December 19, 1949, p. 6.
 3. B. N. Rau, India's Constitution in the Making, (Madras, 1960), p. 166.

refused to incorporate new boundaries into the 1950 Constitution.

The only concessions to the linguistic states cause in the Constitution were the rights given to linguistic minorities to "conserve their language or script,"¹ and to "establish and administer educational institutions" (Article 30.1) with full claim to state education grants. Also, Parliament was given the power to form new states (Article 3a) and to "alter the boundaries of any state" (Article 3d) without having to go through the difficult amendment procedure set out in Article 368.

Within a year of its creation, the Republic was faced with its first concerted campaign for the formation of a linguistic state. From 1951 to 1953 the Telegu-speaking areas of Madras and Hyderabad demanded the creation of Andhra Pradesh, and were eventually satisfied. The issues in this campaign, and the political and caste groups behind it, naturally distinguish it from those conducted in Bombay and the Punjab. Also, it preceded the reorganisation of states in 1956, whereas the Bombay and Punjab campaigns had this important event as a common background. Nevertheless, the formation of Andhra Pradesh at the end of intense and protracted linguistic agitation set a significant precedent for a similar series of events in other states, and is worth considering in outline form.²

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1. The Constitution of India, Part III (Fundamental Rights), Article 29 (1).
 2. For a chronology of events, see Indian Press Digests, Vol. II, No. 1, pp. 104-105, and Vol. II, No. 2, p. 69 ff. The

All four Dravidian languages were represented in the vast Madras Presidency, and movements to separate them into their own states began as early as the thirties. As mentioned above, this problem was one of the special concerns of the Dar Commission in 1948. The Telegu speaking population occupied the rich eastern coastlands around the deltas of the Krishna and Godavari rivers, as well as the barren inland areas of Telengana and Rayalaseema. Telengana was part of Hyderabad state, and remained so until the reorganisation of 1956. The Telegu case for a separate state was given priority in the JVP Report, but the Report gave no support to the Telegu claim, adamantly opposed by the Tamils, that Madras city should be included in their new state.

The campaign for Andhra Pradesh was characterised by fasts and satyagrahas, as well as by a great deal of political in-fighting among Congress factions and the Communists, with caste groups deeply involved on both sides. The Central government and the Congress High Command were at first unresponsive to Telegu demands, insisting on "amicable settlement" of the disputed areas before allowing

important roles played by the Communists and various caste groups are studied in Harrison, India: The Most Dangerous Decades, pp. 204-245. See also the brief account in the Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, (New Delhi, 1955), p. 18.

Madras to be broken up. A prominent Congress leader, Swami Sitaran, fasted for thirty-five days in August 1951, and led satyagrahas the following year. In November 1952, Potti Sriramalu, a former disciple of Gandhi, entered a fifty-eight day fast that resulted in his death, and precipitated widespread and violent demonstrations. Within four days Nehru announced to the Lok Sabha that a Telegu-speaking state would be formed, but without Madras city. The next months were spent dealing with Bellary District, which had a mixed Telegu and Kannada speaking population, then in August 1953 the Andhra State Bill was passed by Parliament, and the new state inaugurated on October 1. A very shaky Congress government was installed, which subsequently collapsed in November 1954. In the elections the following year, Congress managed to consolidate its factions, defeat the Communists, and form a reasonably stable administration.

The aftermath to Andhra's successful campaign was, as Congress feared, a renewal of demands for other linguistic states. Agitation in Kerala and Karnatak, Gujerat, Maharashtra, and the Punjab was more noticeable in 1953 than in previous years. The Communists in particular, having learned in Andhra of the political capital to be gained from linguistic controversy, began to seek fresh battlegrounds.¹

1. The Surat Communist Conference, August 1953, resolved to demand a separate Gujerat state, (Indian Press Digests, Vol. II, No. 7, p. 129), CPI members of the Lok Sabha, immediately after Nehru's pronouncement on Andhra in December 1952, demanded the formation of Karnatak and Kerala (ibid.,

The debate in Parliament during the summer of 1953 over the Andhra State Bill had provided a national audience for these regional demands.

Even in Andhra, the linguistic campaign was continued under the banner of Vishalandhra (Greater Andhra), the object being to add the Telegu districts of Hyderabad to the new state.

Congress finally decided to end the linguistic clamor by seeking a concrete and general solution. At the end of August, 1953, Nehru promised a nation-wide rearrangement of boundaries,¹ and on December 2nd he announced to the Lok Sabha the creation of the States Reorganisation Commission "to investigate the conditions of the problem, the historical background, the existing situation, and the bearing of all important and relevant factors thereon." The Commission was to "make recommendations in regard to the broad principles which should govern the solution of the problem and, if they so choose, the broad lines on which particular states should be reorganised."² None of the three appointed commissioners was a Congressman. In the eighteen months before they submitted their report, the commissioners received over fifteen thousand petitions and interviewed more than nine thousand persons.

Vol. II, No. 2, p. 82), and in February 1953, the Punjab Conference of the CPI decided to campaign for a separate Punjabi-speaking state (ibid., Vol. II, No. 4, p. 69).

1. New York Times, August 28, 1953, p. 6.
2. — From the Resolution appointing the Commission, quoted in Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, p. i.

The significance of the Commission lay in the fact it was directed not to discover whether or not reorganisation was necessary, but to determine the best way in which to carry it out. With the integration of the princely states completed, the postponement recommended by the Dar Commission could no longer be maintained.¹ This official recognition of the problem, however, by no means implied official sanction of the linguistic states principle. The Government's resolution, appointing the Commission, pointed out that:

the language and culture of an area have an undoubted importance. ... In considering a reorganisation of the states however there are other important factors. ... The first essential consideration is the preservation and strengthening of the unity and security of India. Financial, economic, and administrative considerations are almost equally important.²

On the same theme, the Commission's report begins its chapter on "Rationale of Reorganisation" by saying that "the demand for the reorganisation of states is often equated with the demand for the formation of linguistic provinces, " but there has been "some shift in emphasis on the linguistic principle and a growing realisation of the need

1. "This logic (that reorganisation should be delayed) must yield now to the realities of the situation, which render further postponement of the question impracticable".
Ibid., p. 23.
2. Ibid., Appendix B, p. 266.

to balance it with other factors."¹ After reviewing the "evolution of thought on the rationale and objectives of the reorganisation of States with particular reference to the concept of linguistic States", the Report maintains that there is general agreement on the need for reorganisation, but not on the desirability of the linguistic principle. "Reasoning against the reorganisation ... has been coloured by the presumption that (it) must lead to a linguistic redistribution of States."²

The section of the Report dealing with language as a "factor bearing on reorganisation" concludes that "it is neither possible nor desirable to reorganise States on the basis of the single test of either language or culture, but that a balanced approach is necessary in the interests of our national unity."³ The Commissioners believed that "the problems of reorganisation vary from region to region," and "it would be unrealistic to determine any case by a single test alone." Reorganisation would therefore be based on the "totality of circumstances and on an overall assessment of the solution proposed."⁴

This negative attitude to linguistic states on the part of the Commission was borne out in its recommendations. As was expected,

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1. Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, p. 10.
 2. Ibid., p. 24.
 3. Ibid., p. 45.
 4. Ibid., p. 66.

the "A", "B", "C" classification of states was dropped. The proposals involved significant boundary changes only outside the North: Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam, Orissa, Bengal, Bihar, and the Punjab were to remain substantially the same, except for the union of former B and C states into Rajasthan and the Punjab. The cases for dividing U. P., for creating a hill state in Assam, a Jharkhand (tribal) state in Bihar, and a Punjabi-speaking state in the Punjab, were all rejected. The Report proposed a huge central state to be formed by merging the Hindi-speaking districts of Madhya Pradesh and the C states of Bhopal and Vindhya Pradesh with most of Madhya Bharat. The predominant language would be Hindi. The Marathi-speaking districts of Madhya Pradesh were to become a separate state, Vidarbha. Bombay state was to lose four Kannada speaking districts to Mysore, and gain five Marathi-speaking districts from Hyderabad, as well as the Gujarati states of Kutch and Saurashtra.

Only in the South was the linguistic principle strictly followed. Madras gained Tamil areas from Travancore-Cochin, and lost its Kannada and Malayalam districts on the west. Karnataka (now called Mysore) was created by adding the Kannada-speaking districts of Bombay, Hyderabad, and Madras to the state of Mysore. Kerala was created out of the former state of Travancore-Cochin by trading Tamil for Malayalam areas with Madras. Andhra was to retain its 1953 shape,

and was not to receive Telengana unless two-thirds of the Hyderabad legislature should wish unification after the 1960 elections. (This was the major exception to the application of the linguistic principle in the South).

On the whole, the proposals were a repudiation of the "one language, one state" formula. Bombay and the Punjab remained bilingual, Vidarbha and Telengana were separated from their "mother tongue" states of Bombay and Andhra Pradesh. Yet in the South, the Commission broke its adoption of the district as its "basic unit for making territorial adjustments" in order to trade taluks,¹ and even sub-taluks, between the four states, in the interests of linguistic homogeneity.

As had been promised, the Commission took other factors into account. All the states, including those in the South, received careful consideration as economic and administrative units. Financial deficits were calculated; underdeveloped districts, potential mineral and hydro-electric resources, irrigation, and development projects were all noted. The location of a capital and the existence of public service personnel were discussed in each case.

The Report was gradually revealed to the press in sections,²

1. Somewhat equivalent to a township.
2. See the Times of India, October 1 to 10, 1956.

and when it was publicly released on October 10, 1955, there were few real surprises. Because the Commission's proposals still had to receive endorsement from the Congress high command before being placed before Parliament, they became bargaining points for the several interests that opposed them. There is no need to list here the reactions in each part of the country to each proposal; it is safe to generalise that virtually every recommended change was contested, although only a few of the protests raised were strong enough to be effective. The six month period following the release of the Report was one of intense political activity in the form of bargaining and negotiation in New Delhi, supported by demonstrations, hartals, riots, and so on, in the areas concerned. The proposals, and the Bill to implement them, received two lengthy airings in Parliament, the first in December 1955 (fifty-five hours in the Lok Sabha and forty-one in the Rajya Sabha) and the second in the Monsoon Session, July and August 1956.¹ Finally, in November, the States Reorganisation Bill was made law, and the new boundaries quickly implemented. The proposals of the Commission had been generally accepted, the main exceptions being the addition of Telengana to Andhra Pradesh, of Vidarbha to Bombay, and the withholding of Himachal Pradesh from the Punjab.

1. See W. H. Morris-Jones, "Recent Political Developments in India - I", Parliamentary Affairs, Vol. XI, No. 4, (1958), p. 478.

The passage of the Bill, in spite of the year of stormy debate that preceded it, still failed to provide a final solution. During the December 1955 debates, Nehru had said that "the two most important issues in the matter of States reorganisation appear to be Bombay and the Punjab. I do not care to think what happens to them provided the people of Bombay and the people of the Punjab live in good will."¹ Nehru's emphasis on these two states was well placed, but unfortunately the 1956 Bill did not resolve these "important issues", and it soon became obvious that the people involved were not yet prepared to "live in good will". In Bombay and the Punjab the States Reorganisation Bill had subordinated or ignored the linguistic states principle, and thus left the central government to face another five years of linguistic agitation.

1. Jawaharlal Nehru, Speeches, (Delhi, 1954-58), Vol. III, p. 178.

CHAPTER TWO

BOMBAY

The division of Bombay into linguistic states in 1960, like most political events in modern India, has historical roots going far deeper than the preceding decade or even century. A brief examination of the history of this part of India, and the peoples who inhabit it, may give perspective to, if not explanations for, its current affairs. It will also allow us to compare the nature and history of the two protagonist groups in the linguistic controversies of Bombay, the Marathis¹ and the Gujaratis. The greater portion of this chapter, however, will be specifically concerned with events between 1955 and 1960, that is from the release of the States Reorganisation Commission's report to the creation of Gujarat and Maharashtra. This period can be divided into two important stages. In the first, lasting from the release of the report in October 1955 to the passage of the amendment making Bombay a bilingual state in August 1956, linguistic agitation was initiated by the Marathis, and carried out mainly in Bombay city. In the second, lasting from August 1956 to the bifur-

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1. We shall use the term "Marathis", interchangeably with Maharashtrans, to designate the people living in Maharashtra and/or speaking the Marathi language. This general term should not be confused with "Maratha", the name of an important caste in the state. See W. H. Moreland and A. C. Chatterjee, A Short History of India, fourth ed., (London, 1960), p. 254.

cation of the state in the spring of 1960, the initiative passed to the Gujeratis, and Ahmadabad became the centre of agitation.

The earliest historical reference to western India is the Indus civilisation, which reached down the coast in the third millenium B. C.¹ At the beginning of the Christian era, satraps of dynasties centred in the Northwest ruled as far south as the Gulf of Cambay, until their defeat in the fifth century by the Gupta Empire, with its centre in Bihar. Following the collapse of the Gupta Empire, about 700 A. D., local rulers dominated the area, but they offered the Muslims, arriving in the twelfth century, little concerted resistance. The great Moghul emperors, with their capitals in Agra and Delhi, began to expand their rule into the Deccan and western India. In 1572 Gujerat was annexed to the Moghul Empire and remained a part of it for two centuries. The Marathis, however, rose frequently and effectively against their would-be conquerors. Between 1650 and 1680, the Maratha soldier, statesman, and national hero, Shivaji, constructed a system of strongholds throughout the Deccan and, just as the Moghul Empire was entering its decline, lay the basis of a Maratha Empire. After Shivaji's death, the Maratha Confederacy, ruled from Poona by the Peshwa

1. This historical summary is drawn from: J. Allan et. al., The Cambridge Shorter History of India, (Cambridge, 1934); Percival Spear, India, A Modern History; and Moreland and Chatterjee, A Short History of India.

(chief-minister), continued to grow, until by 1750 it had reached the eastern coast, Bengal, and even Delhi. Marathi rule was nowhere noted for its leniency, and its imposition on Gujerat (Shivaji had sacked Surat) maymark the earliest point of antagonism between the Marathis and Gujeratis.

The Confederacy collapsed in 1761 when its huge army was defeated by the Afghans at Panipat, north of Delhi. Five autonomous states emerged from it, and three of them, Baroda (Gujerat), Gwalior, and Indore remained more or less intact until 1947. By the time of the Marathi defeat, the East India Company held a strong base on the west coast and was ready for expansion. Ever since 1608, the Company had been trading in the area. In 1668 it was given the island of Bombay by Charles II, who had received it himself in a Portuguese dowry, and by 1700 a town of 50,000 faced the hostile Marathi-held mainland. The Maratha Wars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw the British, aided by the disunity of the various Marathi rulers, take over Nagpur, Poona, Indore, and Gwalior. These territories were added to the Bombay Presidency, and the city of Bombay (with its motto "primus in Indus") rivalled Calcutta and Madras as a key centre of nineteenth century British India. The Presidency was only slightly disturbed by the 1857 Mutiny; such talented governors as Elphinstone and Malcolm had laid a

foundation that kept the history of the area mainly confined to details of administrative reform, suppression of banditry, and the development of trade through Bombay.

The Presidency was multilingual. It included Kannadas in the south, Marathis in the centre, Gujaratis to the north of them, and in the far north, Sindhis (Sind was a semi-autonomous division of the Presidency, added to it in 1842, and detached in 1936). Marathi was spoken outside the Presidency in the area around Nagpur known as Vidarbha, which was part of the Central Provinces, and in various princely states contiguous to or surrounded by Bombay. Similarly, Gujarati was spoken outside the Presidency in the princely states of the Kutch Peninsular. The State of Bombay that emerged after Independence remained multilingual, and was expanded by the addition of sixty-six princely states. Over two hundred small states were merged to form Saurashtra, which was largely Gujarati speaking.¹

The Marathis have figured much more prominently in the historical development of western India than the Gujaratis, and in their struggles with the Moghuls and the British exhibited the warlike quality later borne out by Marathi participation in militant politics.²

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1. See Holden Furber, "The Unification of India, 1947-1951", *Pacific Affairs*, December 1951, pp. 355 and 358. A much more detailed study of these mergers is found in V.P. Menon, The Story of the Integration of the Indian States, (Bombay, 1956), chapters 8 (Saurashtra) and 9 (Bombay states).
 2. For example, the Congress' early extremist movement was led by B. G. Tilak, and the most violent interlude in CPI policy, from 1948 to 1951, was under the general secretaryship of B. T. Ranadive.

This characteristic was tempered by considerable accomplishments in writing and learning by the Marathi Brahmins, who made Poona a cultural centre recognised by the whole nation.¹ The Marathis made up the largest single community in the city of Bombay, supplying much of the labour force in the factories and textile mills,² and about eighty percent of the city's civil servants.³ Looking on Bombay as "their" city, the Marathis naturally resent the fact that much of the city's commerce and trade is in Gujarati hands. The Marathi language has its beginnings about 600 A. D., when it superseded Maharashtri, the Prakrit tongue from which modern Marathi is largely derived. It became distinguishable from Kannada and Telegu, and developed a fairly extensive literature. It is written in the ordinary Devanagari script, and spoken by about twenty-seven million people.⁴

The history of the Gujaratis is much less tumultuous than that of the Marathis, perhaps because of their character ("soft in

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1. Nehru has noted that the Marathis "are hard and wiry" and "distinguished themselves in professions and scholarship". Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India, (New York, 1959), p. 248.
 2. See Harrison, India, The Most Dangerous Decades, p. 266n.
 3. Times of India, November 10, 1955, p. 1.
 4. V. K. Narasimham et. al., eds., The Languages of India: A Kaleidoscopic Survey, (Madras, 1958), p. 50.

body, gentler, richer", according to Nehru),¹ perhaps because the divisive Rajput clan system under which they lived discouraged nationalist movements. Included in the Gujarati-speaking population are the small but important communities of Jains and Parsees. The Jains, about one and a half million strong, are a reformist sect of Hinduism with roots as ancient as Buddhism. Their fundamental tenet is ahimsa, or non-violence. (Gandhi, a Hindu from Saurashtra, mentions that Jainism was part of the tradition in which he was raised)². The Parsees, originally Zoroastrians fleeing Muslim persecution in the Middle East, are centred around Bombay city. Famous for their commercial talents, they prospered under the British and established communities in business centres throughout India, (the industrialist Tata family is Parsee), maintaining Gujarati as their mother tongue. They number only about 100,000, but this gives little indication of their overall influence. The Gujarati language appeared in archaic form in the twelfth century A.D., since when it has developed a literature, assimilating with little change European, Prakrit and Persian words. It is written in a modified Devanagari script, and

1. Nehru, Discovery of India, p. 248.

2. M. K. Gandhi, An Autobiography, (Ahmadabad, 1940), p. 16.

spoken by just over sixteen million people.¹

The movements for linguistic states born in the colonial era were strengthened with the arrival of Independence. After Independence came the creation of Andhra Pradesh and the formation of the organisations and popular sentiments that were to force the linguistic issue through the latter half of the 1950's. For our study of Bombay, we can consider the period between 1947 and 1954 a prelude to the more turbulent years that were to follow.

In the early fifties, there were active campaigns for the creation of Marathi and Kannada speaking states. The latter campaign, which was also being carried on in Hyderabad and Madras, was ended, except for continuing minor border disputes with Maharashtra, when the States Reorganisation Commission recommended the formation of Karnatak, or Mysore, to include the entire Kannada speaking population. Several organisations were formed behind the Marathi cause, for example the All-India Maharashtra Conference,² and the United Maharashtra Propaganda Committee.³ But the most prominent was the

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1. See Narasimham et. al., op. cit., p. x and pp. 27-28. The figures on the sizes of the language groups are based on the 1951 census.
 2. Mentioned in Times of India, January 4, 1951, p. 5.
 3. Times of India, December 19, 1949, p. 1.

Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad (United Maharashtra Conference).

When it was established in 1946, the Parishad was dominated by Congress, but gradually it included more and more leftist groups and members. Its leader, Shankarrao Deo, was a former member of the Congress Central Working Committee and was thus an influence on Marathi Congressmen.¹

The 1952 general elections seemed to produce little evidence of popular support for these movements. One opposition party, the Peasants and Workers Party, ran on a united Maharashtra platform, but with caste rather than linguistic support.² No party specifically represented the Gujarati cause. Surveys in the cities of Poona and Bombay,³ and in the nation as a whole,⁴ implied the linguistic issue was almost dormant as a mass movement.

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1. See Marshall Windmiller, "The Politics of States Reorganisation in India: the Case of Bombay", Far Eastern Survey, September 1956, p. 132.
 2. S. V. Kogekar and R. L. Park, eds., Reports on the Indian General Elections 1951 - 1952, (Bombay, 1956), p. 33.
 3. Ibid., p. 37 and p. 52. In a state assembly constituency in Poona, one month before the election, only five out of 232 respondents mentioned united Maharashtra as an issue.
 4. Linguistic states ranked last in a list of eight issues brought out in campaign speeches and manifestoes. W. H. Morris-Jones, "The Indian Elections", Political Quarterly, July - September, 1952, p. 241.

The creation of Andhra Pradesh the following year, and the government's promise of a nation-wide reorganisation, spurred the linguistic organisations into action. A significant step in the movement for Maharashtra was the signing of the Nagpur Pact at the end of September 1953, by Marathi leaders from Madhya Pradesh, Hyderabad, and Bombay states. The Pact¹ called for the union of all Marathi-speaking people into one state, with Bombay as its capital and Nagpur as a part-time capital. The signatories included ministers from the Bombay and Madhya Pradesh cabinets, and officers of the Maharashtra and Vidarbha Congress Committees.²

In spite of the concessions to Nagpur and the eastern Marathi districts, the reaction to the Pact from Vidarbha was strongly negative, and the Mahavidarbha Parishad (Greater Vidarbha Conference) met in October to lead the movement for a separate state.³ Reaction from central Congress was also negative: the nationally oriented president of the Bombay city Congress Committee, S. K. Patil,

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1. For details, see Times of India, September 29, 1953, p. 1, and Indian Press Digests, Vol. II, No. 7, p. 123.
 2. Congress was organised in Bombay state into four Pradesh (provincial) committees, representing Maharashtra, Gujarat, Vidarbha, and Bombay city. In this thesis, the committees are referred to in shortened form (viz. Maharashtra Congress Committee instead of Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee).
 3. Indian Press Digests, Vol. II, No. 7, p. 140.

deplored the Pact's proposal to put Bombay into a unilingual state.¹ On the other hand, the Maharashtra Congress Committee gave its full support to the Pact.² As to be expected, the Gujarat press in Bombay was "not very kind to it".³ Thus the complex pattern of divisive lines was drawn for perusal of the States Reorganisation Commission.

Once the Commission had recommended that Bombay's Kannada-speaking districts join Karnatak, it was faced with the more thorny problem of whether or not to split the rest of the state into Gujarat and Maharashtra. The Commission's Report notes⁴ that the bilingual state was already financially and administratively sound, that there was no pressing demand in Gujarat for a separate state, and that opinion favouring Samyukta Maharashtra was not unanimous, before it admits that the crux of the problem was the city of Bombay. There were three possible solutions: retain the bilingual state with Bombay as its capital; create unilingual states and let Maharashtra have Bombay as its capital; create unilingual states and keep Bombay separate as a centrally administered area. The Commission argued against the

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1. Times of India, October 6, 1953, p. 1.
 2. Indian Press Digests, Vol. II, No. 7, p. 124.
 3. Ibid., p. 125.
 4. Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, p. 112.

second choice,¹ as the Dar and JVP reports had done in 1948, on the grounds that the city would lose its cosmopolitan character if placed in a unilingual state. It also argued that the Marathis, although the largest single community in the city, still constituted a minority of about 44%. It rejected a separate status for Bombay for financial and administrative reasons:² deprived of the revenues from the city, the rest of the state would become a deficit area, and creating a centrally administered unit might "be regarded as a retrograde step."

The solution, in the Commission's view, was an enlarged bilingual state, containing the Gujarati areas of Saurashtra and Kutch, and the five Marathi districts of Hyderabad, and retaining Bombay as the state capital. The Report records the belief that "influential sections" of the Gujarati community preferred a composite state, and notes the assurance by the Gujarat Congress Committee that "important elements" were "prepared to live and to work together in one state with their Maharashtran brethren in the larger national interests, as also in the interests of the city of Bombay to which they seem greatly attached."³ Such statements by the Commission hardly helped to quell the Marathi cry that the bilingual

1. Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, p. 114.

2. Ibid., pp. 116-117.

3. Ibid., p. 120.

state solution was a sellout to (Gujerati) "big business" cartels seeking to retain control of the city.¹

The Commission recommended a separate state for Vidarbha.² Its arguments for this were regional, based on Vidarbha's distinct history from the rest of Maharashtra, and its fear of a drainage of power from Nagpur to Bombay, and financial, based on the fact Vidarbha, with its cotton crops, was a surplus area. The Report notes that even the Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad had made overtures to Nagpur's interests in order to win support for a united Maharashtra.³ Probably the real reason for the Commission's recommendation on Vidarbha, although left unstated, was to keep the Gujarati-Marathi populations in the bilingual state evenly balanced; the proposed state would be 48% Marathi, and the addition of Vidarbha would give the Marathis a clear majority.

During the months between the release of these recommendations and the passage of the States Reorganisation Bill, the linguistic organisations, the political parties, and the population of Bombay struggled almost continually, only to land more or less in the place they had

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1. See statement of president of the Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad in Times of India, October 11, 1955, p. 7.
 2. States Reorganisation Commission Report, pp. 122-124.
 3. The Nagpur Pact had suggested the state High Court and the State Assembly sit part of the time in Nagpur.

begun, at the cost of several hundred lives. Encouraged by Nehru's hint that the Commission's proposals would not constitute the final word on reorganisation, the group most disappointed by them, the Marathis, began a campaign to prevent them from being put into effect. Within a week of the Report's publication, a meeting of the Congress High Command with delegates from the Gujarat, Bombay and Maharashtra Committees produced two opposing resolutions: from the central party organisation, unilingual states and a separate Bombay city, with Bombay voting to decide its own future after five years; from the Maharashtra Committee, the Commission's bilingual state, but with the addition of Vidarbha. No compromise was reached. The Maharashtra Congress Committee adopted its delegates' resolution, and the Gujarat Committee condemned it, refusing to consider the inclusion of Vidarbha.¹ The central Congress organisation faced the task of imposing discipline and a compromise on its contentious regional factions.

Popular reaction to the Commission's recommendations was being led in Maharashtra by the Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad, which put forth a separate Marathi state, with Bombay as the capital, as a minimum demand,² and rejected the Maharashtra Congress Committee's

1. Windmiller, "The Politics of States Reorganisation in India: the Case of Bombay", pp. 133-134. See also Times of India, October 26, 1955, p. 1.

2. Times of India, October 24, 1955, p. 1.

resolution. There was considerable pressure from the Parishad's left wing elements to begin demonstrations, and the Congress members were caught between central party discipline and losing control of the Parishad to the Communists.¹

On November 9, the central Congress Working Committee resolved in Delhi to separate Gujerat and Maharashtra and put Bombay under central administration. It left the question of Vidarbha undecided.² This change from the recommendation of the Commission meant, for the Marathis, the loss of their capital altogether, instead of sharing it in a bilingual state, and they began to express their opposition in the streets of Bombay. A "comparatively non-violent" demonstration was held on November 18, and on the 20th a mass meeting to defend the central Congress proposal, addressed by S. K. Patil and the state's chief minister, Morarji Desai, was broken up when stones, cocoanuts, shoes, and chairs were tossed at the speakers.³ The next day, in spite of Communist hesitancy because of the imminent arrival of Khrushchev and Bulganin in the city,⁴ the leftists staged a one-day general strike.

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1. Windmiller, op. cit., p. 133.
 2. Times of India, November 10, 1955, p. 1.
 3. Times of India, November 21, 1955, p. 1.
 4. Windmiller, op. cit., p. 137.

Six hundred thousand men came out of work, and ensuing riots killed ten people and injured three hundred. Congress remained split: most of the Maharashtran Congress members of the Bombay Assembly resigned, and talks between Desai, the Bombay, and Maharashtran Congress Committees broke down.¹ No solution seemed in sight as the Bombay issue consumed two of the nine days spent debating states re-organisation in the Lok Sabha during December.

Violence abated while the debates were on, and while Congress in Delhi hinted at a complete solution.² Finally, on January 16, 1956, Mr. Nehru issued a cabinet communique, and made a broadcast to the nation,³ announcing official government endorsement of the Working Committee's proposal: separate Gujerat and Maharashtra states, and a centrally administered Bombay. Vidarbha would be part of Maharashtra. Rioting broke out in Bombay for six continuous days, reaching its peak on January 19. The textile mills closed down, curfews were imposed, and mobs engaged as many as fifteen thousand police, who were forced to open fire on several occasions. Official reports said seventy-

1. Times of India, December 8, 1955, p. 1.

2. Even the Maharashtra Congress Committee seemed undecided at this point as to which path it should take. Compare the different stands taken in Times of India, January 11, 1956, p. 1, and January 12, 1956, p. 1.

3. Transcribed in Nehru, Speeches, Vol. III, pp. 185 ff.

one people were killed;¹ foreign correspondents put the figure as high as four hundred.² Because the riots had spread from the working quarters of the city, it was the Communists who were charged with their instigation, and hundreds of left-wing leaders were arrested.³ In return, the socialists laid charges of police brutality, and the Communist Party in Delhi blamed the riots on the government's mishandling of the situation.⁴

By the beginning of February, the city was quiet, and violence was now flaring in Calcutta over the proposed merger of Bengal and Bihar into a bilingual state.⁵ The central Congress party concentrated on

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1. Times of India, January 24, 1956, p. 1.
 2. New York Times, February 9, 1956, p. 4.
 3. New York Times, January 17, 1956, p. 2.
 4. New York Times, January 25, 1956, p. 9.
 5. The proposal was made by the Chief Ministers of West Bengal and Bihar in accordance with a central Congress resolution of January 23, 1956, calling for unity and cooperation. It was hailed by the Working Committee as an act of "wisdom and foresight", and by the CPI as "retrograde". Demonstrations protesting the merger were held in Calcutta during February, and in April an Independent candidate, leader of the West Bengal Linguistic States Reorganisation Committee, defeated the Congress candidate in a significant Calcutta by-election. At the beginning of May, the West Bengal cabinet decided to drop the proposal. See Asian Recorder 1956, p. 637, for the text of the original proposal, and p. 818 for the statement of the Bengal Chief Minister announcing its abandonment.

bringing its Maharashtra Committee back into line, and relative calm prevailed until June, with the draft of the States Reorganisation Bill having been put before the Lok Sabha in March. At the All-India Congress Committee session, held in June in Bombay, Nehru announced that the city could decide which state it wanted to join after five years, but had "disqualified itself" from doing so immediately. He also pointed out that the Maharashtrians should be easily able to influence that decision in view of their numerical predominance.¹ However, riots broke out in the city once again, and police opened fire when agitators harassed a public meeting addressed by the Prime Minister.²

The final act of the campaign to keep Bombay as the state capital was played out in Delhi. While states reorganisation was being debated in the Lok Sabha for the second time, in July, C. D. Deshmukh, a Maharashtra, resigned as Finance Minister. He claimed that Nehru's handling of the Bombay issue was "cavalier and unconstitutional", and condemned the government for refusing to inquire into the police firings.³

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1. For Nehru's speech, and the text of the A-ICC resolution on linguistic minorities and violence, see Asian Recorder 1956, pp. 868-870.
 2. New York Times, June 4, 1956, p. 1.
 3. See Lok Sabha Debates, July 25, 1956, col. 818-819. Morris-Jones suggests that Deshmukh, who was not a Congressman, resigned because of his feelings of alienation from the rest of the cabinet rather than because of his linguistic loyalties. See "Recent Political Developments in India - I", p. 479. For Nehru's denial of the charges, see Lok Sabha Debates, July 30, 1956, col. 1510-1511.

Then at the beginning of August, a sudden movement developed among the MP's to revert to the Commission's original proposal of a bilingual state, but with Vidarbha included. Congress High Command welcomed a memorandum signed by 180 MP's (only six of whom were from Maharashtra or Gujerat)¹ proposing an amendment that would create a bilingual Bombay, and thus "provide a unique opportunity to the Marathi and Gujerati people ... to set a noble example of national integration."² Opposition to the amendment was expressed by the nine MP's from Vidarbha, and by various Marathi and Gujerati organisations,³ but the Congress Parliamentary Party approved with only one dissenting vote.⁴ The amendment was passed by the Lok Sabha 241 votes to forty on August 10. Nehru told the House, in a tone of relief, that "we are at the last stage of the long journey."⁵ When a questioner pointed out to Home Minister Pant that the journey was a circular one, and the result similar to the resolution proposed by the Maharashtra Congress Committee the previous October (see above p. 41), the Minister replied,

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1. Asian Recorder 1956, p. 1003.
 2. Quoted in Times of India, August 4, 1956, p. 1.
 3. Times of India, August 6, 1956, p. 7.
 4. Times of India, August 7, 1956, p. 1.
 5. Lok Sabha Debates, August 10, 1956, col. 2798.

"I think there was some irony and the time was not mature for it."¹

Pant's irony seemed misplaced, and Nehru's relief ill-founded. Instead of giving the Gujaratis their own state, and keeping Bombay city out of Maharashtra, the rapid developments in Delhi left the Gujaratis in a minority position, a little more than one third of the bilingual state's population. Their reaction was immediate, and the locus of linguistic agitation swung to Ahmadabad, which had just missed becoming a state capital. On August 9, the day before the passage of the amendment, students stoned Congress headquarters in the city, twenty-four hour curfew was imposed and defied, and rioting continued for almost a week, killing eighteen people.² The bilingual state solution was accepted 99 to 11 by the Gujarat Congress Committee,³ but public meetings addressed by the state's chief minister Morarji Desai, himself a Gujarati, were met with boycotts, burning effigies, and violent demonstrations.⁴ These protests, however, failed to change the law, and on November 1, 1956, with saluting of guns, the map of India was transformed as States Reorganisation was

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1. Quoted in Times of India, August 8, 1956, p. 1.
 2. New York Times, August 19, 1956, p. 26.
 3. Times of India, August 20, 1956, p. 1.
 4. Loc. cit. and Times of India, August 27, 1956, p. 1. Desai fasted for seven days to oblige his people to listen to him, and to protest the displays of violence.

put into effect simultaneously across the country. Bombay, the largest of the fourteen new states, and the Punjab shared the distinction of being the only states that were not unilingual.

The remainder of the year was relatively calm¹ as political leaders prepared for the second general elections, to be held in February, 1957. In Bombay state, party alignments were formed with remarkable clarity along either side of the linguistic issue. The central Congress party was defending the bilingual state, with support from its regional committees in Gujerat and Bombay city, but with its Maharashtra Committee badly split. Opposition parties of all hues organised behind the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti (United Maharashtra Committee) in Maharashtra, and, less solidly, behind the Mahagujarat Janata Parishad (Greater Gujerat People's Conference) in Gujerat. In a majority of ridings electoral arrangements were made by the opposition parties in order to split the vote as little as possible.² Many independents ran³ in the name of a unilingual state and with the support of the opposition parties.

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1. Although Nehru was given a bad reception in Ahmadabad in October (New York Times, October 5, 1956, p. 5) and riots broke out again in the city in December (New York Times, December 16, 1956, p. 45).
 2. Compare the number of two and three way contests in 1957 with the multi-sided contests in 1962, when the opposition was once again disunited. India 1957; A Reference Manual, (Delhi, 1957), pp. 558-562 and India 1962, pp. 575-577.
 3. Independents became the largest single bloc in the opposition, with 64 seats. The next largest was the PSP with 36.

The results of the election constituted a severe but not general setback for Congress in the Bombay state Legislative Assembly. In Maharashtra proper, the Samiti made an unqualified triumph, unseating Congress veterans, dropping the Congress vote from 56% in 1952 to 30%, and winning one hundred of the 134 seats. In other Marathi areas, Congress lost ground but was not defeated: it retained twelve of the twenty-five seats from Bombay city, thirty-five out of forty-two in Marathwada (the former Hyderabad districts), and fifty-five out of sixty-three in Vidarbha.¹ In Gujarat, Congress strength was unaffected, and in the Kutch and Saurashtra areas the party received 72% of the vote, its highest return in the whole country. Because of the solid support from most of Gujarat, Congress retained a majority in the Bombay Assembly,² but the loss of ninety-six seats in Maharashtra was emphatic warning of the political strength of linguistic sentiments.

The parliamentary activity of the linguistic fronts was sustained,³ but it was the organisation of demonstrations in the streets

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1. Results taken from Times of India, April 4, 1957, p. 9.
 2. Total seats (four unaccounted for): Congress 232, linguistic blocs (Independents plus the opposition) 150, others 10. From Times of India, March 24, 1957, p. 1.
 3. In February, 1958, all opposition members of the Bombay Assembly walked out as it was being opened to protest, in the words of a statement issued by the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti and the Mahagujarat Parishad, "the continued bilingual policy of the government to perpetuate injustice arising from the imposition of a bilingual state." Quoted in Times of India, February 19, 1958, p. 1.

that eventually proved the most effective instrument for splitting the bilingual state. Ahmadabad continued to be the centre of agitation, with major outbreaks usually occurring annually in August, on the anniversary of the demonstrations against the 1956 amendment. In early July, 1958, the Mahagujarat Janata Parishad called for a "major and final struggle" towards a unilingual state,¹ and by August prolonged riots and police firings resulted in a twenty-four hour curfew being imposed. Leaders of the Parishad were arrested,² but another satyagraha was organised, and curfew was imposed on the site of a memorial raised to the "martyrs" of August, 1956.³ Little response was shown by the central government except for speeches by the Prime Minister condemning the use of violence⁴ and declaring his opposition to unilingual states.⁵

During the winter, activity seemed to be confined to the legislatures. A Vidarbha MP in the Lok Sabha demanded, if the Bombay State issue were re-opened, a separate state for Vidarbha,⁶

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1. Overseas Hindustan Times, July 3, 1958, p. 3.
 2. Overseas Hindustan Times, August 21, 1958, p. 2.
 3. Overseas Hindustan Times, September 4, 1958, p. 3.
 4. Hindu Weekly Review, November 3, 1958, p. 2.
 5. Hindu Weekly Review, December 21, 1958, p. 2.
 6. Lok Sabha Debates, February 18, 1959, col. 1701.

and an MLA in the Bombay Assembly from the same area was expelled from the Congress party for making the same demand.¹ The opposition members walked out of the opening of the 1959 session of the Bombay Assembly, as they had done the year before, and the Mahagujarat Janata Parishad announced the beginning of another campaign.²

Disturbances intensified in the summer of 1959. Morarji Desai was met by two hundred hostile Mahagujarat Janata Parishad demonstrators on a visit to Ahmadabad,³ and the observance of 'martyrs' day' in August spread, with violence, to other cities in the Gujarati part of the state.⁴ Again the Parishad threatened a "grim and final battle by the people" unless the Union and Bombay governments had agreed to split the state by November 1st. At last, by the end of August, Congress leaders in Delhi decided the unilingual demands must be met in order to end the continuous conflict, and the issue was formally recognised as re-opened when it was placed before the Working Committee on September 7.

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1. Hindu Weekly Review, March 23, 1959, p. 3.
 2. Hindu Weekly Review, February 9, 1959, p. 13.
 3. Hindu Weekly Review, July 27, 1959, p. 13.
 4. New York Times, August 9, 1959, p. 72.

Negotiations between the regional and central parties began once again, principally through a committee of the A-ICC. Splitting the state presented complicated financial and administrative problems, but the only political obstacle was the demand for Vidarbha. A timely state assembly by-election in Vidarbha may have helped to decide the issue: an Independent Congressman favouring unity of Vidarbha with Maharashtra defeated the official Congressman campaigning for a separate state.¹ On December 4, the Working Committee adopted a resolution to split Bombay into "two states, new Bombay and Gujerat", with Vidarbha part of new Bombay, and with "adequate arrangements for the protection of the interests of Vidarbha and the city of Nagpur."²

The next step, to translate a party resolution into law, was relatively straightforward. According to Article Three of the Constitution, the introduction and content of a bill changing the boundaries of state must be approved by the assembly of the state concerned before going to the Lok Sabha. The Bombay Reorganisation Bill passed the Bombay Assembly, with ten amendments, after five days of debate, on March 18, 1960. Its ninety-one clauses included the name of Maharashtra, the establishment of a permanent High Court at Nagpur, and a

1. Hindu Weekly Review, November 2, 1959, p. 13.

2. Quoted in Hindu Weekly Review, December 28, 1959, p. 2.

grant of Rs. 505.5 million to Gujarat to cover its deficits for ten years and to help construct capital buildings in Ahmadabad.¹ On April 19 the Lok Sabha gave the bill almost unanimous consent, the only dissenting vote coming from a Nagpur MP, and rejected more than a hundred amendments. During the seven hour debate, Home Minister Pant observed, "any object could be gained through peaceful means and not through violence."²

Amid processions and many speeches, the two new states were inaugurated on April 30, 1960. The bilingual solution of 1956 had survived intact for three and a half years. Presumably satisfied, the Mahagujarat Janata Parishad decided, far from unanimously, to disband itself.³

Dissatisfaction, however, now emerged in violent form in Nagpur. The case for Vidarbha had been recognised by the States Reorganisation Commission in 1956 only to be rejected in the negotiations that followed; the Gujaratis had succeeded in having negotiations started again in 1959, but again the Vidarbha demand had been turned down. The first week of the new Maharashtra was celebrated in Nagpur by a "protest week" organised by the Nag-Vidarbha Andolan Samiti.

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1. Hindu Weekly Review, March 21, 1960, p. 13.
 2. Asian Recorder 1960, p. 3336.
 3. Hindu Weekly Review, April 4, 1960, p. 13.

(Nag-Vidarbha Protest Committee). A procession resulted in rioting, looting, police firing, and the imposition of curfew, which was not lifted until May 4.¹ Since then, agitation has been little more than sporadic, although a serious outbreak occurred a year after Maharashtra was inaugurated.² Vidarbha involved a small geographic area, much smaller than any of the post-reorganisation states, and support for a separate state did not appear to be particularly strong in the legislature or among the people. There was definite local resentment in Nagpur, which had once been the capital of the Central Provinces under the British, of the loss of power to Bombay, more than five hundred miles away,³ but the separation from Hindi-speaking Madhya Pradesh in 1956 solved the linguistic problem and thereby removed the most potent weapon available to the activists in Nagpur.

Perhaps the best indication that linguistic discontent had been allayed by the 1960 bifurcation is the result of the 1962 general election. The Mahagujarat Janata Parishad had ceased to exist, and the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, abandoned by all opposition parties but the Communists, was a "shell of its former self."⁴ Congress made a spectacu-

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1. New York Times, May 4, 1960, p. 4.
 2. New York Times, April 1, 1961, p. 3.
 3. See Hugh Tinker, India and Pakistan, A Political Analysis, (New York, 1962), p. 137.
 4. Norman Palmer, "The 1962 Elections in North Bombay", Pacific Affairs, Summer 1963, p. 133.

lar revival in Maharashtra, which was the only state in the union to give it a majority (51.23%) of the vote. The state party organisation had been expertly reunited by the new Chief Minister, Y. B. Chavan, with the result that Congress won 215 of the 264 seats in the Maharashtra Assembly, an increase of sixty seats over 1957. The Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti won only thirty-two of the 232 seats it contested; the Nag-Vidarbha Andolan Samiti won four out of twenty.¹

After five years of uncertainty, the establishment of unilingual states seemed to end the possibility of further changes in the status of Bombay. The linguistic campaigns in Bombay, and their results, illustrate a certain pattern of political change; whether or not this can be taken as a standard pattern for India can be better considered after examining the campaigns for linguistic states in the Punjab.

1. For complete returns see Asian Recorder 1962, p. 4556.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PUNJAB

The history of the Punjab up to the sixteenth century consists of an impressive array of invaders emanating from the Gangetic plain to the southeast, or descending from the mountain passes in the northwest. In the following centuries, its history was dominated by the Moghuls, the Sikhs, and the British, each of these having an important but distinct influence on events in the Punjab over the last two decades. The campaign for a Punjabi-speaking state has been conducted since Independence. This campaign has no clearly marked phases, as did the one in Bombay, but does have two periods of particularly intense activity, in 1955 and in 1960-61. It reached a climax in the autumn of 1961, and since then has been carried on in such a desultory fashion that it can be considered virtually expired.

The obvious difference between the campaign for linguistic states in the Punjab and in Bombay is the result: in 1960 Bombay was split into two unilingual states; the Punjab is still bilingual. The reasons for this difference presumably lie in the setting, the nature, or the ingredients of the Punjab campaign, since its aim and timing were ostensibly the same as those of the Marathis and the Gujeratis. But these reasons will be explored in the last chapter. This chapter, after a brief outline of the Punjab's history, its people and their

languages, will concentrate on the details of the campaign itself.¹

The Aryan invasions from the northwest were the Punjab's² first experience of domination by people from beyond the mountain borders. This connection with the west was renewed many years later by the Persian invasions of the sixth century B. C., and by Alexander, then was broken by the expansion of the Mauryan Empire into the Punjab from Bihar, in the third century. The reign of a series of Hellenic kings was eventually terminated by the central Asian migrations which pushed Scythian, then Kushan, tribespeople over the northwest passes. They conquered the Punjab about 75 B. C., and their dynasties survived until about 380 A. D., when the Gupta Empire again put the Punjab under rulers from Bihar. With the fall of this empire, the Punjab reverted to the rule of local kings.

By the seventh century a new force was sending invaders across the deserts and mountains, into the sub-continent - Islam. The Punjab was little affected by the Muslim conquest of Sind in 711, but beginning about 1000 Turkish tribes raided, then ruled, the Punjab,

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1. The same historical sources are used in this chapter as in Chapter Two.
 2. The "Punjab" here refers to the historical region, covering the upper Indus plain. In 1947 this was divided into East and West Punjab, in India and Pakistan respectively. Reference to the Punjab after 1947 will be to the East, or Indian, Punjab.

and effectively introduced the religion that would ultimately cause its partition. After a brief but devastating visit from Tamurlaine in 1398, the Punjab was ruled from Delhi by Afghan Muslims, the Lodis. Just over a century later the long-enduring Moghul Empire was founded. The Punjab was annexed to it by Akbar, and was ruled indirectly from Delhi and Agra.

At this time Sikhism was emerging as an indigenous movement within the Punjab. It had been established during the fifteenth century as a reform sect of Hinduism, rejecting caste and polytheism, and adopting certain characteristics of Islam.¹ The religion's founder, Nanak, was followed by a series of nine gurus (spiritual teachers). Sikhism was tolerated by Akbar, but was subsequently persecuted by the Moghuls. The ninth guru was executed by Aurangzeb in 1675. It was the last guru, Gobind Rai, who responded to this persecution by developing the militaristic aspects of the faith, stressing physical fitness and a sense of brotherhood. Gobind Rai was killed by a Muslim in 1708.

About 1750 the Sikh bands began to descend from the foothills where they had taken refuge. They became a political force in the Punjab towards the end of the century when Ranjit Singh gained supremacy

1. See Khushwant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, Volume I, 1469-1839, (Princeton, N.J., 1963).

over these bands, and was appointed Governor of Lahore by the Afghan emperor in Delhi. He built up a large disciplined army, dropped his allegiance to the capital, and ruled the Punjab as an independent Sikh state, with Lahore as the political capital and Amritsar the religious. The territory of the Sikh Empire came to include all the Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and part of Afghanistan. Ranjit Singh died in 1839, and the succession to power was confused by death and intrigue. The Sikh army crossed into East India Company lands in 1846 and was defeated by the British. Kashmir was taken from Sikh control. Another clash with the British occurred in 1848, then the following year the Sikh army was finally defeated and their state annexed to the British Empire. The Punjab was never under East India Company rule, and took no part in the 1857 Mutiny.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, and the first of the twentieth, the Punjab experienced extraordinary physical development under the combination of the British Raj working with an energetic people. Canals and canal colonies, railways, bridges, roads, and irrigated land made the Punjab one of the most prosperous regions of India, and one considered a model of colonial administration. But the benefits of economic prosperity and efficient government could not eliminate the religious tensions running deep in Punjab society; with Independence, the province was divided in two, and communal conflict

erupted into the tragedy that was partition. The artificial line separating India from Pakistan divided the Sikh community in two, and the Sikhs in the West Punjab left their rich landholdings on the canals to arrive destitute in India. Similarly, the Hindus, many of whom were businessmen or professional civil servants in the Pakistan towns, entered India as refugees. Altogether ten million people crossed the new border, five million in each direction, and half a million lost their lives.

The political boundaries of the East Punjab were essentially the same as under the British, except for the line of partition running between Amritsar and Lahore. In the mountains to the north east, twenty-one small and generally backwards princely states were joined to form Himachal Pradesh, a "Part D" state directly administered by the centre. The combined population was about one million, and considered too different in language and customs to be merged with the Punjab.¹ Four states ruled by Sikhs, and two by Hindus, were united to form the "Part B" Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU)², an irregularly shaped territory of ten thousand square miles. The dominant state was Patiala, which was larger and richer than the rest

1. See Menon, The Story of the Integration of the Indian States, pp. 297-299. Another state, Bilaspur, much of which was submerged by the Bhakra Dam project, was joined to Himachal Pradesh in 1954.

2. Ibid., Chapter 12.

combined, and whose ruler became the Rajpramukh of PEPSU. The Sikhs were in a majority in PEPSU, and Punjabi was the official language. Three very small Muslim states¹ were merged with the British province territory to form the state of Punjab. The official languages in the state assembly and secretariat were Urdu and English, although provision was made for the use of Hindi and Punjabi in the schools, and for their gradual introduction as the official state languages.² Because of the political ramifications, the 1951 Census gave up trying to enumerate separately, as it did everywhere else in the country, the number of people in the Punjab speaking Hindi, Pahari (spoken in the Haryana hill tracts), Urdu, and Punjabi.³

The main languages involved in the linguistic states campaigns were Punjabi and Hindi. Punjabi⁴ was traditionally the language of the

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1. Ibid., p. 308.
 2. These provisions were part of the "Sachar formula", devised by the Chief Minister of the Punjab in 1949. No real progress was made towards making Hindi and Punjabi the official languages until 1955, when they were introduced at the district government level. See Asian Recorder 1955, p. 392, for resume of the Sachar formula and the 1955 innovations. The 1955 changes were considered a very inadequate concession to the Akali Dal, but were branded as "appeasement" by the Hindus. See "Punjab Newsletter", Times of India, September 12, 1955, p. 5.
 3. S. Natarajan, "The Punjab Ferment", New Commonwealth, October 1961, p. 670.
 4. Narasimham et. al., The Languages of India, pp. 57-58.

Punjab peasantry, while Persian, then Urdu, were the languages of the courts and government under the Moghuls and the British. Punjabi was first written in the Gurmukhi script when it was adopted by the second Sikh guru for recording the sacred hymns, since Persian was the script used by the Muslims, the Sikhs' persecutors. The holy book of Sikhism, the Granth Sahib, is also recorded in Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script. Much of the vocabulary of Punjabi has been assimilated from Persian and Urdu, and it can be written in Arabic or Devanagari scripts as well as in Gurmukhi. The communal label was first attached to Punjabi when the Sikhs used the Gurmukhi script for their scriptures, then became more firmly applied during this century as religious tension rose, and Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi became thought of as the languages of the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs respectively.¹

The Hindi spoken in the Punjab is naturally heavily influenced by Persian vocabulary. Most Punjab Hindus have Punjabi as their mother tongue, or at least are able to understand it, but pressure to use Hindi has been exerted by the Hindu reform movements, such as the Arya Samaj, and the general campaign of the central government to make Hindi a national language.

In spite of the communal connotations these languages have taken on, the lines of demarcation between language groups in the

1. Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, (London, 1953), p. 161.

Punjab are far from clear. The region has traditionally been multi-lingual,¹ and even now it is unknown how many people speak Punjabi, and how many of those that do write it in the Gurmukhi script. This has been a source of confusion in the campaign for linguistic states, and has certainly detracted from its effectiveness. An additional source of confusion has been the difficulty of distinguishing linguistic demands from communal, since the campaign for a Punjabi-speaking state has been led by the Akali Dal, a political and militaristic organisation of the Sikh religion. Its opponents claimed the Akali Dal wanted a Sikh state and was using the linguistic states principle as a means to that end; these claims were fortified by the fact the Akali Dal itself failed to make its objective clear or consistent.

Because of its predominance in the Punjab linguistic campaigns, it is necessary to trace the background of the Akali Dal.²

Akali (faithful) was the general name of the movement from 1919 to

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1. A most vivid picture of the complex relationships of the various languages in the Punjab is found in the autobiography Punjabi Century, by Prakash Tandon, (New York, 1961). Referring to pre-Independence days in the West Punjab, the author notes that Hindi was at first known only by the women, who learned it from the Arya Samaj. A Hindu, he considered Punjabi an "unwritten dialect", although it was his mother tongue. See pp. 66-68.
 2. See Khushwant Singh, The Sikhs, p. 139-144.

1925 to regain control of the gurdwaras (Sikh centres of meeting and worship) from the priests, who were backed more or less openly by the government. After a number of demonstrations and police actions, the Akali movement triumphed when an Act was passed in 1925 that gave control of the gurdwaras to the popularly elected Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (the Honorific Gurdwara Management Committee, or SGPC). Within a year, a faction of the Akali movement led by Master Tara Singh, the Akali Party, won the SGPC elections and, sustained by the wealth and patronage thus available to it, has dominated Sikh politics ever since. With the coming of Independence the Akali Party, now known as the Akali Dal, began contesting seats in the legislatures as well as acting as a Sikh pressure group. Its political success has been variable, since it has usually been forced to compete for Sikh votes with rival communal parties, as well as the non-communal national parties, and even with its own factions.

It is the Akali Dal that has initiated and run, almost exclusively, the campaign for Punjabi Suba, a Punjabi-speaking state.¹ Opposition, or rather obstruction, since there was no effective counter-

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1. The Communist Party in the Punjab has declared that its persistent demand for a Punjabi state is, unlike the Akali Dal's, strictly linguistic and non-communal. However, in the actual campaign the Communists and the Akali Dal often worked together and it would be very difficult to trace a separate linguistic campaign run only by the Communists.

demand for a Hindi-speaking state, has come mainly from the Hindu organisations, such as the Arya Samaj, as well as from Sikh organisations, allied with the government or otherwise in political competition with the Akali Dal. Consistent obstruction has come from the Congress governments in Delhi and Chandigarh.

Until 1955, there were few occasions when agitation for Punjabi Suba took the form of mass demonstrations.¹ Activity was confined almost wholly to the legislatures of PEPSU and the Punjab, and to electioneering. The pattern that emerges from these years is blurred somewhat by a proliferation of pressure groups with conflicting objectives,² but on the whole political manoeuvring seems to have taken precedence over the demand for unilingual states. Before 1950 the Akali Dal members in the state and central legislatures had sat with the Congress governments, but on July 30 1950 they were ordered by the Akali Dal president to sever this connection and form separate

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1. The Akali Dal defied a ban on public meetings during February and March 1953, but this was more in protest against the ban than for Punjabi Suba. See New York Times, March 1, 1953, p. 4. The following December demonstrators for Punjabi Suba broke up a public meeting being addressed by the Prime Minister. New York Times, December 28, 1953, p. 3.
 2. For instance, the Indian Press Digests, Vol. II, No. 7, pp. 129-141 mentions, among others: the All-India National Sikh Party (demanding recognition of Punjabi by the Punjab government); the All-India Harijan League, the Congress Workers' Convention, the Mazhbi Sikhs, the Sikh Scheduled Castes and the All-Party Scheduled Castes (all opposing Punjabi Suba); the Punjabi-speaking State Committee and the Rujasti Akali Dal (both for a unilingual state but opposed to the Akali Dal).

opposition blocs, on the grounds that Congress had "repressed" the Sikh minority.¹ The 1952 elections thus saw the Akali Dal running as a separate political party, with a Punjabi-speaking state as its principal platform.² In the Punjab it entered constituency alliances with parties ranging in outlook from the Communists to the Jan Sangh, but PEPSU, with a concentrated Sikh population and a Congress party weakened by factions, gave the Akali Party its best returns.

In 1954 elections had to be held again in PEPSU³, but this time the Akali Party entered as two separate factions, split its own vote, and lost most of its seats to Congress. In December of the same year elections were held for the SGPC, and a Communist won the presidency with Akali Dal support, defeating the Congress-backed Khalsa

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1. Times of India, August 1, 1950, p. 7. Understandably, not all the MLA's were willing to comply to the order, and a new Sikh faction was formed over this issue in December. See Time of India, December 23, 1950, p. 6.
 2. See the chapters on PEPSU and the Punjab in Kogekar and Park, Reports on the Indian General Election 1951-52.
 3. In 1952, Congress had won 26 of the 60 seats, the Akali Party 22, others 5, and Independents 7. At first a government failed to form, then the Akali Party entered a coalition with Congress, called the United Democratic Front. This fell when nine seats were declared invalidly elected, including three belonging to cabinet ministers, and the central government took over the PEPSU administration in March 1953. Fresh elections were held the following year. See Morris-Jones, Parliament in India, pp. 106-107.

Dal candidate. Tara Singh declared this victory vindicated the Akali demand for Punjabi Suba. He denied Congress charges that the gurdwara resources would be used for activities other than religious and cultural, but at the same time said the Sikh religion could not be separated from politics.¹

By this time the States Reorganization Commission was preparing its report, and the Punjabi Suba campaign became considerably more vigorous. In April 1955, when the Commission was holding hearings in Amritsar, the Punjab government imposed a ban on the shouting of slogans. In defiance, the Akali Dal staged a civil disobedience campaign which featured demonstrators chanting "Punjabi Suba Zindabad" (long live the Punjabi state). This lasted into July, when the government lifted the ban "to mark the great occasion of the Prime Minister's triumphant return" (from the USSR and Europe).² During the campaign, police had used the Punjab Security of State Act to seize presses publicising the demonstrations, and had arrested Tara Singh, the president of the SGPC, and several thousand demonstrators.³ Over seven thousand

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1. Times of India, December 6, 1954, p. 1. The Punjab government claimed the SGPC victory was based on "virulent, misleading, and false propaganda."
 2. Times of India, July 13, 1955, p. 1.
 3. Ibid., and Times of India, July 6, 1955, p. 1.

of these were still in jail at the end of the campaign, and Tara Singh was not released until September.¹ The mass arrests and far-reaching government restrictions were not repeated on this scale until 1960, when the Punjabi Suba campaign entered its second, and last, militant phase.

The Akali' Dal's petition to the States Reorganisation Commission argued for a Punjabi-speaking state on the grounds that: it would eliminate discontent and thus aid development programmes; the state would form a compact viable unit, with a strong homogeneous population, on the border with Pakistan; and it would provide a contented Sikh community for India.² The Commission countered by saying that the discontent was communal, not political or economic, and would not be solved by the creation of a new state, that the lack of distinct linguistic boundaries made the creation of a compact unilingual state unfeasible, and that since "the minimum measure of agreement necessary for making a change ... does not exist", the proposed state would "solve neither the language problem nor the communal problem" and might instead increase friction.³ The Commission also argued

1. New York Times, September 7, 1955, p. 3.

2. Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, p. 140.

3. Ibid., pp. 145-146.

that Punjabi and Hindi were so close as to be mutually comprehensible, and even in the Punjabi-speaking areas university exams were written in Hindi when the option was given. The linguistic problem, which was "primarily one of scripts", could best be solved by application of the Sachar formula (see above p. 61), not by forming separate states.¹

The final reason given for rejecting the Akali petition was the belief that it was "opposed by large sections of the people speaking the Punjabi language and residing in the areas proposed to be constituted into a Punjabi-speaking state."² The Report cites the 1952 election results to show support was "confined to communal elements in the Sikh community". It concludes: "while we view the doctrine of a linguistic homeland with serious misgivings, we consider that the concept of a communal homeland is fraught with even more dangerous potentialities."³

The Commission rejected, on the same grounds, the claim that PEPSU, as the only state with a Sikh majority, should be kept separate if a new Punjabi-speaking state were not to be granted. It also rejected the demand for a separate state for the Haryana hill tracts. The Commission recommended an enlarged Punjab state, containing PEPSU and

1. Report of the States Reorganisation Commission, p. 144.

2. Ibid., p. 141.

3. Ibid., p. 148.

Himachal Pradesh, with the proportion of Sikhs being as high as in the previous Punjab state (about 32%) but less than in PEPSU. The Commission's chairman, Sayid Fazl Ali, dissented over the inclusion of Himachal Pradesh in the belief that the underdeveloped hill area should remain under central government administration.¹

The reaction to the Report in the Punjab was adverse, but not as sudden and violent as it had been in Bombay, perhaps because the northwest of India was experiencing a particularly disastrous flood season. After some hesitation, all the political parties in PEPSU approved the merger with the Punjab, although the Communists did so only on the condition it meant a further step towards a unilingual state.² The Akali Dal rejected the Commission's recommended state, but instead of staging demonstrations entered a series of negotiations with Nehru and Pant. Tara Singh was requesting that the new state be at least 50% Sikh.³ In the Punjab Assembly, all the opposition and even a faction of the Congress were favouring unilingual states, but with various and conflicting formulas.⁴

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1. See appended note, ibid., p. 238.
 2. Times of India, October 28, 1956, p. 8.
 3. Times of India, October 25, 1956, p. 1.
 4. Times of India, November 27, 1956, p. 14. This rift in the Punjab Congress eventually resulted in a change in the government in January, 1956; the new Chief Minister replacing Sachar was P. S. Kairon. See Times of India, January 15, 1956, p. 1.

Once it had announced its decision on Bombay, in January 1956, Congress High Command turned to the Punjab question, and began a third set of conferences with the Akali Dal. These eventually produced a solution that involved keeping Himachal Pradesh out of the new state (thus raising the proportionate number of Sikhs), and the establishment of separate Regional Committees,¹ with no statutory powers and no direct connection with the government, for the Hindi and Punjabi-speaking areas. Punjabi would be the official language, to the extent allowed by the Sachar formula, in the regions formerly in PEPSU. Although in February the All-India Akali Conferences in Amritsar had passed a resolution reiterating the demand for Punjabi Suba,² the Akali Dal General Council approved in March the solution reached by its negotiators in Delhi. The Akali Dal's resolution read in part:

Keeping in view the internal situation in the country, and the international situation, and in the belief that this proposal may solve some of their difficulties which they expected would be solved through the Punjabi Suba, this representative gathering of Sikhs gives its general approval to the principle of the plan and is prepared to work it out honestly.³

Tara Singh said that he was relieved by the Council's decision.

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1. The composition and powers of these Committees are produced in Bondurant, op. cit., pp. 118-121.
 2. Asian Recorder 1956, p. 676.
 3. Quoted in ibid., p. 721.

This reconciliation with the government produced a split within the Akali Dal when Sardar Gian Singh Rarewala, former Chief Minister of PEPSU, decided that the abandonment of the Punjabi Suba demand should mean the withdrawal of the Akali Dal from politics. He crossed the floor of the PEPSU Assembly, along with eight supporters, to join the Congress benches, and was expelled from the Akali Dal by its Executive Committee.¹ But the following month, August 1956, the Dal also conferred with Congress about the possibility of a merger, and the result was a political alliance for the forthcoming general elections.² This resulted in a strong gain for Congress, since it received most of the 16% of the vote that in 1952 had gone to the Akali Dal. A last minute attempt by Tara Singh to dissolve the alliance failed. The Akali-supported MLA's remained on the Congress side, and only one of Tara Singh's nominees was elected.³

This political rapprochement with Congress did not completely free the newly constituted Punjab from disturbances, which in 1957 and 1958 displayed a distinctly communal flavour as Sikhs and Hindus clashed or demonstrated against one another. For seven months in 1957 the

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1. Asian Recorder 1956, p. 944.
 2. Times of India, August 19, 1956, p. 10.
 3. Times of India, March 26, 1957, pp. 1 and 5.

Arya Samaj had sponsored a campaign for the increased use of Hindi in education and administration, and its adoption as the official language of the Punjab.¹ This naturally aroused Sikh opposition, and in August Tara Singh threatened and carried out a peaceful "work stoppage" to protest the violation of the Sachar formula.² The Home Minister was called in from Delhi at the end of the year to help find a compromise, but in February 1958 there were further Sikh demonstrations, a non-violent march of Sikhs through New Delhi, and Sikh-Hindu affrays.³ This conflict developed over the year, in the form of pronouncements from either side rather than open agitation, until in November 1958 Tara Singh announced his decision to renew the campaign for Punjabi Suba. The Arya Samaj immediately announced its own plans for "save Hindi" demonstrations.⁴ Then in February 1959 the Akali Dal re-elected Tara Singh as its president and passed a resolution that it would contest the next general election as an independent party. Tara Singh told the Akali convention that the demand for Punjabi Suba had been renewed because the Regional Councils had not been properly

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1. Asian Recorder 1958, p. 1916.
 2. New York Times, August 30, 1957, p. 18.
 3. New York Times, February 3, 1958, p. 2.
 4. The Hindu Weekly Review, November 17, 1958, p. 10.

implemented.¹ The compromise that had pacified Sikh agitation, and the political alliance that had resulted from it, were both dead issues by the spring of 1959.

Another conflict was being carried on at the same time, between the Akali Dal and the Punjab government, over the control of the gurdwaras and the SGPC, a different issue from Punjabi Suba but one not altogether separable.² It pervaded Sikh, and Punjab, politics for most of 1959, almost to the exclusion of linguistic demands. The Akali Dal protested bills passed by the state government, and Tara Singh threatened to begin a fast. He withdrew the threats after conferring with Nehru.³ The main object of this conflict was the election of officers for the SGPC, to be held in February 1960. The Akali Party won by a wide margin, and Tara Singh maintained his control over the Committee.⁴

On the linguistic front, meanwhile, the Punjab government had established in August 1959, a two-man "Good Relations Committee"

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1. Asian Recorder 1959, p. 2522.
 2. During the SGPC election campaign, Tara Singh was quoted as saying, "the struggle for gurdwaras is part of the struggle for our existence, of which the Punjabi Suba demand is a phase." Overseas Hindustan Times, February 18, 1960, p. 4.
 3. Hindu Weekly Review, April 20, 1959, p. 16.
 4. Hindu Weekly Review, February 8, 1960, p. 7.

to re-examine the language issue. It then sparked a revival of the "save Hindi" campaign by refusing to make public the Committee's recommendations.¹ The following March, a committee including state ministers, representatives from various Sikh and Hindu organisations, and chaired by the state Governor, was appointed to consider the Good Relations Committee's report, which had finally been released.² The report recommended a new set of proposals to replace the Sachar formula, but this was rejected by Tara Singh on the grounds that the only solution now was bifurcation into linguistic states. The SGPC refused to participate in the committee's hearings; Akali Dal MP's and MLA's were instructed to leave the Congress benches and join the opposition.³ The campaign for Punjabi Suba was launched in full force for a second time. Not coincidentally, this was done within a month of the central government's acquiescence to linguistic states demands in Bombay.

By the end of May 1960 the Punjab government had used its Preventive Detention Act to place Akali Dal leaders under arrest, and Tara Singh began a jail term that was to last for seven months.⁴ Mass

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1. Overseas Hindustan Times, October 1, 1959, p. 4.
 2. Overseas Hindustan Times, March 10, 1960, p. 3.
 3. Asian Recorder 1960, p. 3245.
 4. Hindu Weekly Review, May 30, 1960, p. 3. Seven hundred Sikhs, including 150 Akali Dal leaders, were arrested during the last week of May. New York Times, May 31, 1960, p. 5.

demonstrations were held regardless. They concentrated on New Delhi, and particularly around the House of Parliament. The police set up road blocks to prevent demonstrators from being "imported" into the city from the Punjab.¹ Agitation was suspended in the middle of June after a clash with police in Old Delhi resulted in seven hundred arrests and the death of one demonstrator.² The Akali Dal was hoping to put pressure on the government by over-filling the jails. Twelve hundred demonstrators were released in August after they had given a guarantee that they would not participate further in the campaign. Chief Minister Kairon announced there were still thirteen thousand in prison;³ the Akali Dal claimed there were 25,000.⁴ On two occasions during the autumn the prisoners rioted, and four were killed when police opened fire.⁵ A Punjab High Court Inquiry decided that the prison riots were instigated by Akali leaders trying to prevent the release of demonstrators, since this might be taken as a sign of the movement's weakening.⁶

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1. New York Times, June 12, 1960, p. 35.
 2. New York Times, June 13, 1960, p. 16.
 3. Overseas Hindustan Times, September 1, 1960, p. 4.
 4. Hindu Weekly Review, September 5, 1960, p. 10.
 5. New York Times, October 11, 1960, p. 21, and December 5, p. 10.
 6. Overseas Hindustan Times, November 17, 1960, p. 3.

At the end of the year a further technique, fasting, was adopted to strengthen the campaign. Sant Fateh Singh, the Akali Dal leader while Tara Singh was in prison, entered Amritsar's Golden Temple (which, as a religious shrine, could not be invaded by the police) and began a fast on behalf of Punjabi Suba. The Chief Minister declared that his government would not respond to this kind of pressure, and was capable of handling any trouble that might arise from it.¹ (It was seven years to the month since a wave of violence following the fast to death of a Telegu leader prompted the central government to create Andhra Pradesh.)

On January 4, 1961, "in the spirit of compassion and goodwill", and undoubtedly in the hope Fateh Singh would end his fast, the Punjab government finally released Tara Singh from jail.² He immediately held talks with Nehru, but failed to win the concessions he claimed were necessary if Fateh Singh were to stop fasting. By now however, there was some anxiety in the Akali Dal that the fast must end soon or disaster would result. A way out for all concerned was provided by Nehru, who said that his statement at a public meeting on January 8³

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1. Overseas Hindustan Times, January 5, 1961, p. 2.
 2. New York Times, January 5, 1961, p. 9.
 3. Quoted in Hindu Weekly Review, January 16, 1961, p. 3, "the Punjab itself is, broadly speaking, a Punjabi Suba as it is, with Punjabi as the language there. It is true that some parts of the Punjab have Hindi, but essentially Punjabi is the dominant language Thus there is no linguistic difficulty at all."

should allow Fateh Singh to consider his pledge fulfilled. The Akali leadership agreed to this interpretation and the fast, now twenty-three days old, was terminated. On the same day, Kairon announced the release of 5,000 prisoners and the withdrawal of all cases pending against Akali demonstrators, the end of the restrictions on public meetings and processions, and the lifting of the various forms of press censorship that had been imposed during the campaign. In return, Tara Singh declared "agitation will shift from demonstrative to persuasive and constitutional means" until Punjabi Suba was accomplished.¹

The ensuing lull in activity saw Tara Singh re-elected as president of the Akali Dal, although not without factional opposition, and Fateh Singh begin another series of talks with Nehru.² This "persuasive and constitutional" approach came to an end in May when the negotiations collapsed without reaching an agreement, and the Akali leaders began to consider staging more fasts.³ In June, the Akali Dal executive passed a resolution stating that Tara Singh was to undergo "the process of self-immolation" in the cause of Punjabi Suba by beginning a fast unto

1. Hindu Weekly Review, January 16, 1961, p. 3.
2. These concerned, as well as the Punjabi Suba issue, the charges laid against Tara Singh that he was collaborating with the Pakistan government. See Hindu Weekly Review, April 10, 1961, p. 11.
3. See Fateh Singh's announcement in Overseas Hindustan Times, May 25, 1961, p. 4, and Tara Singh's in Overseas Hindustan Times, June 1, 1961, p. 1.

death on Independence Day, August 15, 1961.¹ The Punjab government responded by arresting several Akali leaders and, at the beginning of August, by prohibiting the publication of "any article, report, news item, letter ... relating to or connected with the Punjabi Suba or ... fast by any person in connection with the Punjabi Suba agitation."²

Tara Singh, ensconced in the Golden Temple, commenced his fast as promised, on August 15. He thus opened the final phase in the Punjabi Suba campaign, which, in spite of the tension produced by the fast, was characterised mainly by political leaders searching for compromises and the will to accept them. At first, fasts proliferated: 250 Sikhs in Bombay staged a one-day sympathy fast, and a leader of the Punjab Hindus began a "counter fast" in Delhi, to "protest the mentality of Master Tara Singh which has prompted him to resort to a fast to secure the division of the Punjab state."³ This fast was broken after ten days when personal reassurances were received from Nehru, but another counter fast, by a saddhu (holy man), kept up one day longer than Tara Singh's.

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1. Hindu Weekly Review, June 12, 1961, p. 11
 2. Quoted in Overseas Hindustan Times, August 10, 1961, p. 2. The ban was raised on August 18 when an agreement was signed with Punjab editors that they would not publish news "in a manner as may promote the agitation or in any way lead to communal tension." Overseas Hindustan Times, August 24, 1961, p. 2.
 3. Quoted in Hindu Weekly Review, August 21, 1961, p. 2.

Political discussions were quickly opened between Fateh Singh and Nehru, but broke down in failure on August 25. Nehru, appealing to Tara Singh to end the fast because it was the "wrong method", told Parliament that the government was determined not to accede to the demand for Punjabi Suba.¹ Various compromises, such as the establishment of a Punjabi university, changes in the Sachar formula, and a high-power commission of enquiry,² were turned down by Tara Singh, who said he would end the fast if the issue were put before the United Nations.³ He then offered to end the fast if the dispute were settled by a neutral arbitrator, such as J. P. Narayan, but arbitration was rejected as a solution by Morarji Desai, the acting Prime Minister.⁴

On his return to India, Nehru promised a commission would be created to consider discrimination against the Sikhs, but not the Punjabi Suba problem, if the Akalis would end the fast. Talks with the central government on the terms of reference for such a commission

1. New York Times, August 30, 1961, p. 1.
2. Nehru's speech to the Lok Sabha, quoted in Hindu Weekly Review, September 4, 1961, pp. 2 and 6.
3. New York Times, September 1, 1961, p. 4.
4. Hindu Weekly Review, September 11, 1961, p. 3. Nehru was attending the Belgrade Conference of non-aligned countries.

broke down on September 28.¹ By this time Tara Singh's health was in definite danger, although his fast had not so far inspired any popular agitation. Then another offer of a commission "to go into the general question of discrimination" (no mention was made of Punjabi Suba) was made by Home Minister Shastri, and Tara Singh broke the fast on its forty-seventh day. He then issued the statement that he had been

assured by responsible friends² ... that the government of India at the insistence of the Prime Minister has issued a communique assuring us of the appointment immediately of a high-power commission ... to examine the grievances and differential treatment to Sikhs which led me to my fast. As the only grievance ... is the non-application of the linguistic principle to the Punjabi-speaking area resulting in discrimination on a social plane, the said commission is going to examine this question, that is the question regarding the formation of a Punjabi-speaking state.³

This cryptic interpretation of the government's offer brought the fast to an inconsequential finish, with no real concessions having been won from Delhi. The promised commission was duly appointed by a government resolution that contained no reference to Punjabi Suba.⁴

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1. Hindu Weekly Review, October 2, 1961, p. 3.
 2. This refers to H. S. Malik, former ambassador to France, and the Maharaja of Patiala, who had both been acting as mediators between the Akali Dal and Nehru and Shastri during the fast.
 3. Quoted in Hindu Weekly Review, October 9, 1961, p. 4.
 4. See Overseas Hindustan Times, November 9, 1961, p. 1

One thousand Communist demonstrators, then six hundred Sikhs, were released from prison,¹ and once again the restrictions on public meetings were withdrawn. Tara Singh objected to the terms under which the commission of enquiry was appointed, and the Akali Dal boycotted its proceedings, but these gestures were obviously anti-climactic. The fate of the campaign was perhaps best illustrated by the action of a board of Sikh religious leaders, who found Tara Singh and nine members of the Akali Dal executive guilty of violating their sacred vows, and of "dealing a severe blow to the ancient Sikh tradition." Tara Singh was sentenced to reciting scriptures, dusting the shoes of the congregation at the Golden Temple, and cleaning the Temple's kitchen utensils. The following day he was re-elected president of the SGPC.²

In the general elections three months later the Akali Dal ran as a separate party, instead of with Congress as in 1957. In 1952, running on a Punjabi Suba platform, it had collected 16% of the vote; in 1962, it received less than twelve percent, and failed to win a majority of the seats even in the Punjabi-speaking areas. Against Congress' ninety seats, the Akali Dal won nineteen (it had contested forty-six) and constituted the second largest opposition group.³ The

1. New York Times, October 10, 1961, p. 3.

2. Overseas Hindustan Times, December 7, 1961, p. 4.

3. For Punjab election results see Asian Recorder 1962, p. 4556.

demand for Punjabi Suba was not abandoned, and was still being voiced in "life and death" terms as late as 1963 at the Akali Dal's annual conference.¹ But as a force in Indian, or even Punjab, politics, it seems to have disappeared.

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1. Tara Singh, no longer the Akali Dal president, was severely attacked at this conference by the new leader, Fateh Singh, See Asian Recorder 1963, p. 5120.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LINGUISTIC CAMPAIGNS AND INDIAN POLITICS

The linguistic campaigns which we have just examined provide us with a picture of the organisation and exercise of pressure on the government, and the response that it evokes. Essentially it is a picture of Indian politics, of who is getting what, when, where, and how. The usefulness of this picture will depend on its clarity as an illustration of the Indian political process. Its value will depend on our appreciation of it, and the purpose of this chapter is to analyse the content and meaning of the material set down in Chapters Two and Three. First, the content gives us the nature of the linguistic campaigns, which groups participated in them, what techniques of pressure, and response to pressure they involved, and what general procedure they followed. Secondly, the analysis can shed light on the operation of the major ingredients of the Indian political system, particularly the parties and the central government. Finally, a comparative review of the campaigns will suggest possible reasons for their success or failure.

There are two levels of participation in the campaigns, the group and the individual. For proper treatment, these would require separate and thorough studies, but we can deal only with selected aspects

of each level. First we shall mention some of the groups¹ that joined the campaign, why they joined and what was their effect, and, secondly, discuss the attitudes and behaviour of the participants themselves.

From our experience with pressure groups in Western political systems, the participation of labour unions in Bombay, of students in Ahmadabad, and of religious organisations in the Punjab, should strike a familiar note. But in India the nature of these groups, and therefore the motivation behind their involvement, is much more political than in the West. Instead of being autonomously organised, financed, and led, the Indian groups are direct instruments of the political parties. (This is not exactly the case with the Akali Dal, which has been a political party in its own right, as well as acting as a religious pressure group, and has kept separate from the major parties. But this only underlines the identification of ostensibly apolitical organisations with direct political activity.) During the nationalist movement, workers, students, and peasants, were recruited into unions and associations that were founded and operated by political parties competing for organised support. Their dependency on the parties still exists, and this implies that the participation of worker and student groups in

1. Generally speaking, the Gujaratis or the Sikhs could be considered "groups", but here we are referring to organised interests, or groups in the "associational" sense of the term.

the linguistic campaigns was under political motivation and direction. Their goal was not the particular advantages (higher wages or lower fees) one would expect these groups to agitate for, but was improving the political position of the parties that ran them.

The participation of Sikhs in the Punjab, considering the Akali Dal was a political party, could be described in the same way. The Akali Dal openly allied with the Communists for political gain,¹ in spite of the fact that they held opposing views on the linguistic state issue. And an Akali leader once admitted that the campaigns were directed towards strengthening Akali leadership over the Sikh community and giving the Akali Dal greater leverage on the Congress government.²

This high degree of "politicalisation" of group life in India has been noted in other non-western political systems, and is considered one of the characteristics that distinguishes them from "modern" political systems.³

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1. For instance, in the SGPC elections of 1954, See above p. 67.
 2. The leader, Bhupindar Singh, said the object of the demonstrators' chanting "Punjabi Suba Zindabad" was not a Punjabi state but "the withdrawal of the ban on slogans, because slogans are important for enthusing the masses." The Economist, July 2, 1955, p. 45.
 3. In the functional approach of Gabriel Almond, the parties in the West serve to aggregate interest, whereas here they are engaged in interest articulation. This failure of "boundary maintenance" between the various functions of a political system is a criterion for distinguishing between a "traditional" and "modern" political system. See G. Almond and James Coleman, The Politics of the Developing Areas, (Princeton, 1960), pp. 40ff.

Two other groups participating in the campaigns, particularly in Bombay, should be mentioned. The interests of big business were alluded to several times as being opposed to the inclusion of Bombay in a unilingual Maharashtra state, but the degree of influence of business groups on the campaign is difficult to trace. Presumably they exerted pressure for economic reasons, but the fact that management was Gujarati, and labour Marathi speaking, meant that it was really social interests that caused these groups to participate.

A second group is one peculiar to the society of India's large urban centres: hooligans, or "goondas".¹ These professional trouble-makers participate in demonstrations for immediate gains, encouraging the breakdown of order that allows them to loot and rob. Sometimes, since a violent demonstration involving police action is considered especially effective, goondas draw salaries from the parties or organisations behind the demonstration. Much of the real violence, the loss of life and property, that occurred in Bombay, Ahmadabad, and Nagpur in connection with the linguistic campaigns could probably be traced to the activity of these elements, but whether or not the goondas were

and 346ff. See also Lucian Pye, "The Non-western Political Process", *Journal of Politics*, August 1958, pp. 478-480.

1. For a brief study of the background and activities of goondas in Calcutta see Weiner, Politics of Scarcity, pp. 190-192.

hired in these cases, or were acting independently, and even the extent of their role in the demonstrations, is difficult to confirm. Nevertheless they gave a definite flavour to the campaigns, and cannot be discounted simply because their own political goals were non-existent.

The linguistic campaigns have shown that many individuals will vote against, and openly defy, the central authority if its policies come into conflict with linguistic or community allegiances. Even the rural population, which since Independence has seldom joined organised campaigns against the central government, was affected by the campaigns for linguistic states, which managed to move out of the urban centres into the countrysides of Punjab, Maharashtra, and parts of Gujerat. But conflict between regional and national sentiments can only be intermittent, and most of the time the attitude of the majority of the population, except perhaps of the highly politically mobilised elements in the cities, has been favourable to the state.

There seemed to be a real lack of consensus, however, between the political leaders in the regions and those in the centre. The view of the central government as a target for immediate political and economic demands, the lack of concern for long range development or national unity, the readiness to inflame and organise community and caste sentiments for the sake of narrow goals such as more advantageous boundaries or a greater share of government largess, are all at-

attitudes that mark a deep cleavage between the provincial politician and the national government leaders.¹ The linguistic states issue was particularly amenable to the expression of these attitudes, since it involved very large groups (by cutting across caste and, theoretically, communal lines), and since the prospects of tangible benefits were high. (These would include the patronage over jobs, development funds, and positions in the universities and civil service, that under a bilingual administration would have to be shared with the other linguistic group.)

Of the techniques used during the linguistic campaigns to exert pressure on the government, the most prominent were various forms of mass demonstrations, including processions, civil disobedience, strikes, and rioting.² The practice of coercing authority by non-violent mass agitation is the heritage of the nationalist era, and M. K. Gandhi. These methods, developed over three decades and used against the colonial government, are still employed in spite of

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1. See Myron Weiner, "Some Hypotheses on the Politics of Modernisation in India", in R. L. Park and Irene Tinker, eds., Leadership and Political Institutions in India, (Princeton, 1959), pp. 22ff. Prof. Weiner terms these leaders "unsuccessful western-minded" and "successful western-minded", to distinguish them from a third group, the "Hindu-minded", whose goals are social and religious revitalisation rather than political or material gain.
 2. For further distinctions and analysis of such techniques see David Bayley, "The Pedagogy of Democracy: Coercive Public Protest in India", American Political Science Review, September, 1962.

the fact the government is now a freely elected one. The continued use of civil disobedience and agitation by a wide variety of organised interests, instead of the more normal "democratic" channels of the lobbies and the legislatures, indicates that the government is unresponsive to popular demands until they are put forth in this manner. The government itself claims that the techniques developed by Gandhi are being exploited by politicians without regard for the Gandhian principles on which they were founded,¹ and that such techniques are both unnecessary and illegitimate under a democratic rule. Fasting, for example, was strongly denounced when it was attempted on a wholesale basis during the Punjabi Suba campaign, and its ineffectiveness at that time will likely inhibit its future popularity as a technique. But civil disobedience and demonstrations, violent and non-violent, although condemned as unsuitable means for coercing the government, will remain in use as long as they prove to be relatively effective, as they certainly were in the linguistic campaigns in Andhra Pradesh and Bombay.

The campaigns also illustrate the various ways the government would deal with mass agitations. The most far-reaching weapon available to the central government for combating instability is the right to take over a state administration and impose "President's

1. These principles are elaborated in Joan Bondurant, The Conquest of Violence, (Princeton, 1958), pp. 36-44.

rule". This was never applied during the linguistic disturbances in the Punjab or in Bombay. But the government did rely heavily on its fairly rigorous Preventive Detention Act, and on Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which can ban public meetings and processions. Both were used in the Punjab and in Bombay, and it was Section 144 that was openly flouted by the Akali Dal demonstrators in their attempt to fill the jails. Police opened fire on demonstrators most frequently in Bombay, and most of the lives lost in the name of unilingual states were taken in the rioting in that city. Compared to Bombay, the campaign in the Punjab was relatively non-violent, and the government reaction in that state, in spite of the infringements on the freedom of the press, was, in return, less severe.

The procedure followed by the two campaigns was roughly the same. They always became more intense when events indicated that the central government would be susceptible to pressure, or whenever the government acquiesced to regional demands elsewhere. The sudden collapse of resistance to the formation of Andhra Pradesh, when that campaign took a violent turn in December, 1952, encouraged agitation in a number of other centres. Then the appointment of the States Reorganisation Commission gave every grievance the prospect of an airing, and regional demands seemed to proliferate. Instead of these demands ending with the release of the Commission's recommendations,

they were intensified by the government's hint that the recommendations were open to modification. In Bombay, agitation following the attempt at one solution always forced the search for another, and this success in inducing the centre to change its mind kept the campaign going for five years.¹ Similarly, the most active phases in the campaign for Punjabi Suba came during the hearings of the States Reorganisation Commission, when there was a chance of influencing its recommendations, and immediately following the accession of the central government to the demand for unilingual states in Bombay, in the spring of 1960. If regional demands are thus strengthened and multiplied, rather than satiated, by government concessions, some form of holding action seems to be the only course open to the central administration.

Following these incentives to action, the linguistic campaigns would enter a period of demonstrations and agitation, which would be

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1. Intense activity came in Bombay with the release of the Commission's report in October 1955, and within a month the proposals were changed by decisions of the Working Committee. These were again followed by disturbance, and another formula was produced in August, 1956, which in turn provoked disturbances in Ahmadabad. These eventually ended when another solution, the divided state, was reached in 1960. This resulted in an outbreak of agitation in Nagpur, but prospects of inducing yet another change seemed poor, and after the outburst in 1960, the Nagpur campaign has thus been mollified.

organised, as we have noted, by political leaders.¹ The campaign's goals were publicised locally and, if possible, nationally, by means of these disturbances. (Punjabi Suba demonstrations were frequently carried out in New Delhi, which was conveniently nearby, and even the Bombay linguistic groups managed to stage demonstrations in the capital city.)² The third step, which would be taken during or after the agitation, was to enter negotiations with representatives of the central government or party. If these negotiations produced an acceptable compromise, as did the talks between the Prime Minister and the Akali Dal in 1956, the agitation would be suspended. In the case of Bombay, such negotiations were complicated by the involvement of several regional Congress committees. Party unity had to be considered along with the regional demands, and the result was often a stalemate. Negotiations for Punjabi Suba, on the other hand, were between two separate parties with few mutual entanglements, and the

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1. At least at first, and often throughout, "popular" demonstrations were not spontaneous, but carefully mounted by organisers. See Weiner, Politics of Scarcity, p. 187. We have noted that "demonstrators" were being imported into Delhi from the Punjab, probably in trucks provided by campaign leaders. (See above, p. 76). This writer has heard, second hand, that "demonstrators" were recruited from Bombay cafes by campaign workers, who paid them Rs5 (\$1) to participate.
 2. Thirteen hundred demonstrators protesting central rule for Bombay were arrested in front of Parliament. New York Times, January 28, 1956, p. 2.

bargaining process was thus simplified and more fruitful. This step of regional-central negotiations was not followed in August 1956, when the bilingual Bombay solution emerged from a manoeuvre in the central parliament that seemed to avoid any regional participation. By doing so, it may have added to the defection of Congressmen from the Maharashtra party in 1957.

The combination of agitation and negotiation carried the linguistic campaigns to the Working Committee, the Congress High Command. It was here that the decisions for central action on the linguistic issues were made, and the success or failure of a campaign in winning concessions from the centre was decided at this point. The decision would be final unless the reaction to it was sufficiently strong that the Working Committee was forced to reconsider, as it did in 1959 concerning Bombay.

We can thus condense the procedure of the linguistic campaigns into four main stages: some kind of incentive to step up the campaign, the exertion of pressure through agitation, negotiations with the centre, and finally the central decision. Obviously, this is not a rigid pattern, but it may provide the basis for comparing the process of the linguistic campaigns with future campaigns involving regional interests and the central government.

Turning to the relationship between the linguistic campaigns and the Indian political parties, our particular concern will be the friction that exists within the parties between their central organs and the regional branches.¹ The linguistic states issue has been notably successful in dividing intraparty loyalties and bringing this central-regional tension into sharp focus.

The policy of the various parties towards unilingual states has not been consistent, but on the whole the opposition parties have favoured them, and Congress has opposed them, or at least its central command has. Of the opposition parties, the CPI has been the most adamant supporter of the linguistic states campaigns, having divided India as early as 1942 into sixteen linguistic "nations", potential units of revolution,² and since Independence having actively promoted linguistic agitation in Andhra and elsewhere. This strategy

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1. As the ruling party, in the centre and in all the states, Congress has been most prone to this type of tension. See Myron Weiner, Party Politics in India, (Princeton, 1957), p. 223; Morris-Jones, Parliament in India, p. 178; Harrison, Most Dangerous Decades, pp. 291-296. Even the Communists with their highly centralised constitution have not been immune. See Gene Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, Communism in India, (Berkeley, 1960), chapter 15, and Harrison, op. cit., pp. 247-248.
 2. Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., pp. 493-495.

proved effective in several regions, but resulted in some branches of the party actually working against each other, and in 1956 the Fourth Congress of the CPI called for a more moderate approach to linguistic agitation, in the interests of party unity.¹ In October, 1955, the central committee tried to discourage its Bombay organisation from launching violent agitation, but failed.² In spite of its secular ideology and centralised structure, the CPI has been strongest wherever it has exploited minority grievances of caste, language, or religion. Considerable factionalism and indiscipline have been the price for this approach to success.³

The other left wing parties have also advocated linguistic states. Although more moderate than the Communists in initiating agitation, they have continually used regional issues as political weapons. The Praja Socialist Party, for example, joined with rebel Congressmen in the Bombay Municipal Corporation,⁴ organised linguistic campaign committees in Gujerat with the Communists,⁵ and allied with

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1. Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., pp. 321-323 and 505-506.
 2. Windmiller, "Politics of States Reorganisation in India", p. 137.
 3. Overstreet and Windmiller, op. cit., p. 221.
 4. Times of India, December 26, 1955, p. 1.
 5. Ibid., August 22, 1956, p. 3.

the Akali Dal in the Punjab.¹ As was the case with the other parties, the PSP's local activities were sometimes frustrated by lack of co-operation from the party's central offices.² The linguistic campaigns even brought the left wing parties into alliances with groups from the far end of the opposition spectrum, the Hindu communal parties. In Bombay, the communal parties joined the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti and the Mahagujarat Janata Parishad, although they won very few seats in the Assembly in the 1957 election. In the Punjab, on the other hand, the communal factor prompted the Jan Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha to oppose the separate Punjabi state and campaign for a Mahapunjab (greater Punjab) that would lower the ratio of Sikhs to Hindus.³

The position of Congress as the ruling party obviously differed from that of the opposition parties: it could not support the linguistic states issue without weakening its central party and setting the local parties against each other. The same way that the issue was an ideal one for the opposition parties - it allowed them to offer a real alternative to Congress policy and suited the flexible and disparate

1. Hindu Weekly Review, May 18, 1959, p. 13.

2. Times of India, October 11, 1955, p. 8.

3. See the statement of the Punjab Jan Sangh Working Committee in Indian Press Digests, Vol. II, No. 7, p. 139.

tactics made possible by their size, structure, and relatively irreplaceable position - it constituted a serious problem for Congress, which as a party suffered critical internal strains, and as a national government faced regional violence and disruption. The effects on Congress were especially evident in Bombay, where the Maharashtra and Gujarat Committees were directly opposed to each other, and dissident Congressmen voted against their party in the Bombay Assembly and even ran against it, as Independents, in the 1957 elections. The central party exerted specific measures to maintain discipline,¹ such as prohibiting its members from participating in agitation for linguistic states or joining organisations involved in the linguistic campaigns,² and chastising its regional committees for overstepping their authority under the party constitution.³ But wherever the linguistic issue was receiving strong popular support, as it was in Maharashtra, local politicians

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1. In addition to the implicit threat of withholding the coveted Congress ticket: the party's Central Election Board must give final approval to every nomination.
 2. Times of India, October 15, 1955. Congressmen were told in 1953 not to engage in public controversy over linguistic states but to express their complaints through the States Reorganisation Commission. Indian Press Digests, Vol. II, No. 7, p. 134.
 3. See the last paragraph of the Working Committee resolution of January 23, 1956, concerning resignations from the party (Asian Recorder 1956, p. 638) and the replies of the Maharashtra Congress Committee (Times of India, January 28, 1956, p. 1, and January 29, 1956, p. 1).

had to choose between rejecting the Congress party line and losing votes. In the Punjab, the demand for Punjabi Suba was not sufficiently vigorous or widespread to produce this dilemma, and the Punjab Congress party consistently followed central party policy by opposing a separate Punjabi-speaking state. The Congress regional committees were sometimes in conflict with each other as well as with the central party. The movement for a separate Vidarbha state, for example, was led by Congress leaders in Nagpur who feared they would be subordinated to the Maharashtra Congress Committee in a united Maharashtra.¹

Not all the conflict within Congress can be attributed to the manoeuvres of regional politicians for the linguistic vote on behalf of local political empires. Some of it, such as the Maharashtran Congressmen's resentment of Morarji Desai, a Gujarati, as their Chief Minister, is inevitable in a party with nationwide membership in a country with a social structure like India's. Some of it stems from the fact that political power, especially at the local level, entails control over material commodities like jobs and funds. The

1. Windmiller, "Politics of States Reorganisation in India", p. 130. Central pressure was applied to the Vidarbha Congress Committee to make it comply with Working Committee decisions: "at our request, they ultimately agreed to join the Maharashtra state," Nehru told the Lok Sabha in February, 1956. Nehru, Speeches, Vol. III, p. 192.

various forms of tension to which Congress is subject were all evident during the linguistic campaigns, but they constituted a difficult episode in the normal order of the party's experience, rather than a specific disaster. The overall effect of the linguistic states issue on Congress, and on all the parties, was not unusually profound, and was not permanent.

Nor did the issue affect the national party system, which consists of a predominant Congress party and a number of weak opposition parties ranged to the right and left.¹ The opposition parties' collaborations on the linguistic issue proved partially effective at the state level, especially in Maharashtra, in undermining Congress supremacy, but these alliances quickly collapsed once the issue was settled. Even in the heat of the campaigns, the linguistic fronts were weakened by party differences on other national and international issues.² This failure of the opposition parties to work together, much less to merge, except for temporary gains at a regional level, indicates Congress' power at the centre will remain unsullied, at least from without.

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1. The strongest opposition party in the Lok Sabha, the CPI, received 10% of the popular vote and holds 29 seats to Congress' 361. The Indian party system has been classified by Almond as "dominant non-authoritarian". See Almond and Coleman, op. cit., pp. 40-42.
 2. For a study of the career and downfall of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti, the strongest of these alliances, see Robt. Stern, "Maharashtrian Linguistic Provincialism and Indian Nationalism", Pacific Affairs, Spring 1964, pp. 39-48. The leading parties in the Samiti, the CPI and the PSP, were frequently at odds over such extraneous issues as Kerala politics, Chinese incursions, and the execution of Imre Nagy.

In the relationship between the linguistic campaigns and the central government,¹ we are continually encountering the government's refusal to recognise regional demands as constructive or legitimate, and, because of this reluctance, its haphazard approach to dealing with them. This lack of response on the part of the government is largely due to the fact it views regional pressure, and even regional politics, in a purely negative light.² In the early fifties, there were frequent declarations that the government would not consider linguistic reorganisation,³ and Nehru was especially adamant in his

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1. Government policy and leadership is sometimes difficult to separate from that of Congress. The Working Committee, for example, is an organ of the party, but consists mostly of Union and Chief Ministers. (Morris-Jones, Parliament in India, p. 176). The distinction made here is between Congress acting as a political party, and Congress acting as the central government.
 2. Local branches of the parties are much more closely tied to caste and communal groups than the centre, which believes such ties are "political" (in the pejorative sense) and do not serve the "public interest", as visualised by central leaders. Weiner believes the regional parties are more realistic in their approach to politics and more useful as instruments for channeling group demands to administrators. Politics of Scarcity, pp. 8-10.
 3. For example, see Times of India, May 25, 1950, p. 6. Congress at this stage talked of commitment to the linguistic principle but voted against acting upon it. See Lok Sabha Debates, July 12, 1952, col. 3678-3758.

opposition to the idea.¹ Although the government's capitulation to violence in the Andhra campaign in 1952 seemed to call for a definite policy for handling future linguistic demands, none was forthcoming. The government instead tried to stress the non-linguistic basis of the States Reorganisation Commission and its proposals.

By rejecting the linguistic principle, and failing to substitute a consistent alternative, the government had to deal with each demand on a piecemeal basis, thus leaving itself always open to pressure from new sources. Usually the centre's behaviour consisted of passive response in the form of condemnatory speeches, committees and conferences, or negative measures to suppress violent agitation. Its one positive gesture, a scheme for five Zonal Councils,² representing regions of three to five states each, with advisory powers for coordinating development, transportation, and so on, obviously had much more connection

1. Understandably, his party was less willing to condemn an idea that had obvious popular backing. It was speculated that Nehru's resignation from the Working Committee in 1951 was partially due to his differences with the party over this point, (Indian Press Digests, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 47) and in 1952 the Congress platform included a promise to examine linguistic states for the south, the only plank considered divergent from Nehru's wishes (ibid., p. 91).
2. The evolution and full content of the Zonal Council scheme is presented in Bondurant, Regionalism vs. Provincialism, pp. 55 ff. There are few references to it now and presumably it never developed into the antidote to provincialism that its founders had intended.

with what the central government would like to happen than with what the states were demanding in the spring of 1956. The central government cannot be accused of causing the campaigns for linguistic states, nor, conversely, of meeting them with unduly suppressive or "undemocratic" measures. But there is some justification for attributing the prolongation of the campaigns after the reorganisation of 1956, as well as their use of demonstrations and violence, to the government's denying the validity of the linguistic states principle while conceding to it under pressure.¹ Its conception of the demand for linguistic states was so influenced by its own commitment to "national unity" that it was unable to treat the linguistic campaigns as strong movements requiring equally strong and positive response. A gulf of this sort between the policy of the federal government and the demands of its citizens can run all the way to foundations of a political system, and weaken the entire structure.

To conclude this chapter, we shall analyse the two campaigns on a comparative basis in order to explain the success of one and the failure of the other. The failure of the Punjabi campaign hinged, of

1. An editorial writer suggests that contrary to Deshmukh's allegations that Nehru handled the Bombay affair in a "cavalier and unconstitutional manner", the Prime Minister was at fault for permitting too much free discussion and open bargaining. Times of India, July 26, 1956, pp. 1 and 5.

course, on its failure to win the desired concessions from the central government. In the first place, there were several factors that made the government less disposed to unilingual states in the Punjab than in Bombay, regardless of the nature or force of the campaign. Also, there were weaknesses in the Punjabi Suba campaign itself that hindered its success.

The fact that the demand for unilingual states in Bombay came from within the Congress party, and in the Punjab entirely from outside groups and opposition parties, probably influenced the government's attitude towards the demands and its readiness to respond. The loyalty of the Punjab Congress Committee to the central party, compared to the defiance of the Maharashtra Committee, meant the government could deal with the Punjabi Suba campaign from a much stronger base. Also, the communal ramifications of the linguistic issue in the Punjab would strike an intuitively negative response in a government pledged to building a secular society. (Linguistic states were not contradictory to this goal). Although the Sikh-Hindu antagonism in 1955-1961 had neither the depth nor scale of Hindu-Muslim hostility in 1947, Congress leaders were naturally wary of communal strife in any form. The location of the Punjab, on the border with Pakistan, would have added to Congress' opposition: establishing a new and unstable state, whose government may not even be in Congress hands,¹

1. The experience of PEPSU, with a Sikh majority and a history

seemed to be a risk worth avoiding. Finally, the Congress leaders who hoped to make Hindi a national language would have resisted the Punjabi Suba campaign because its opponents were Hindi speaking, and its aims were detrimental to the spread of Hindi.¹ None of these points are particularly concrete, but they do illustrate handicaps to the Punjabi campaign that were non-existent in Bombay.

The principal shortcoming of the campaign for Punjabi Suba was the lack of clarity surrounding its goals and its participants. Even if the aims of the Akali Dal were genuinely linguistic, the result would have been communal, since Punjabi Suba would contain a Sikh majority. The Sikh and Hindu population is closely intertwined, occupying the same villages and frequently intermarrying, and communal separation would be impossible as well as highly undesirable. The linguistic boundary between Punjabi and Hindi is slightly clearer, but is in turn blurred by the attempts to make Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script a Sikh rather

of shaky governments that finally collapsed, was not a favorable omen for Punjabi Suba, although the comparison is not altogether a fair one. The argument against Punjabi Suba because of its proximity to the border is weakened by the creation in 1963 of Nagaland, bordering on Burma.

1. Addressing the Lok Sabha, Nehru said, "I wish to give every encouragement to the Punjabi language, but not at the expense of Hindi." Speeches, Vol. III, p. 181.

than Hindu language.¹ In Bombay, the border between Marathi and Gujarati speaking people was comparatively definite (except of course in Bombay city, but there was no question of trying to draw a border through that), the languages themselves were perfectly distinct (Nehru called the Punjabi dispute, in contrast, a question of "philology"),² and the basis of the demand purely linguistic.

Another shortcoming of the Punjabi campaign was its lack of unity. Certainly, because of its communal leadership, the Hindu Punjabi-speaking population did not support it. But neither did all the Sikhs, since many were politically opposed to the Akali Dal (the Congress Chief Minister, P. S. Kairon, is a Sikh), or were simply uninterested in following its movement.³ The factionalism that divided the Sikhs sometimes extended to the Akali Dal itself, so that even the leadership of the campaign was not always solid. Nor was the campaign ever able to unite various opposition parties into as effective alliances as the

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1. A partisan of the Punjabi campaign claims the Hindus rejected the Gurmukhi script to avoid the "impress of Sikh culture", indicating the initiative to distinguish Punjabi and Hindi on a communal basis comes from both sides. Hukam Singh, "The Sikh Case in India", New Commonwealth, January 23, 1956, p. 57.
 2. Speeches, Vol. III, p. 174.
 3. One writer estimates that 40% of the Sikhs were opposed to Punjabi Suba, George Floris, "The Sikhs and the Punjabi Suba", Contemporary Review, September, 1960, p. 503.

Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti; it did receive the support of the CPI and the Socialists, but these continued to operate as separate political parties.

Our concern in the analysis and comparison of the linguistic campaigns has been the campaigns themselves and their relationship to Indian politics. It has been expressed in more general terms than used in the preceding chapters, but has usually maintained a close reference to specific events in the Punjab and Bombay, for its purpose has been to bring the campaigns in these states into perspective. But now the campaigns are terminated, their immediate effects have given way to the more general and lasting effects of the boundaries they produced. The system of unilingual states is now universal in India, with the continued (and arguable) exception of the Punjab, and the consequences of this system are the subject of the broad conclusions of the final chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

LINGUISTIC STATES AND THE INDIAN FEDERATION

The worst fears expressed by India's nationalist leaders about the establishment of linguistic states, that it would "set the ball rolling for the disintegration of the entire country" (the Dar Commission), have proved unfounded; among India's problems since 1956, when most states became unilingual, disintegration has not been paramount. . . Those who predicted the country would not hold together if divided into linguistic states seemed to have underestimated the power - economic and political, as well as constitutional - that would be wielded by the central government, and overestimated the strength and permanency of linguistic demands. The campaigns, although intense in certain regions, were isolated, not national, and their effect was never cumulative. Once the unilingual state was granted, no further demands were made except for interstate disputes over border areas. Those demanding unilingual states were not seeking to destroy the central authority but to improve their position relative to its benefits: the demand was a positive one, recognizing the central government as having the authority to fulfill

it.¹

The premonition of nationalist leaders that unilingual states would prevent the "emotional integration" of India has been considerably more substantiated than their prediction of physical collapse.

The use of regional languages has increased in the provincial administrations, and in the universities, where they have become acceptable teaching media. Consequently, communications between the states has become more difficult and less frequent; and the possibility of instituting a truly national language seems more remote as the standards in English decline and Hindi is openly resisted in the south and taught as a "second" language in several other regions. State governments promote regional literature and culture, sometimes where it barely existed or was long dormant, and often at the expense of broader "national" forms.² Political leaders who have no need to cater to two or more

1. Prof. Weiner contrasts this to the American "states rights" movement, which seeks to diminish central authority and gain independence from it. The Dravida Munnetra Kazagham (DMK) movement in Madras, which talks of seceding from the Indian union, is comparable to this American (and perhaps the French-Canadian) demand, but the linguistic states principle is not. See Politics of Scarcity, pp. 67-69.

2. "India's ... largely regional self-discovery... (is) leading at best to what might be called 'constructive nativism', as in the resynthesis of areal dance forms, but coupled at its worst with provincial bigotry and cultural discrimination". Paul Friedrich, "Language and Politics in India", Daedalus, Summer 1962, p. 555.

language groups for support do not acquire, nor feel compelled to acquire, the "wider culture and wider understanding of India" prescribed, and possessed, by Nehru. Finally, caste blocs that were diffused in a large multilingual state are able to wield more power in a unilingual state,¹ thus lessening the prospect of separating caste from politics.

It is doubtful that these developments, considered undesirable by India's leaders, could have been entirely avoided even if the linguistic states principle had not been applied. Obviously the contrived boundaries surviving the British provinces and the integration of the states could not constitute a permanent structure for the Indian federation. The solution desired by the central government, of large multilingual regions with boundaries determined by geography and economics, seemed almost equally artificial. If social homogeneity within each region were the criterion, boundaries could have been drawn on the basis of local history or culture, but this would have encouraged demands for separate states put forth by tribal groups, such as the Jharkhand in

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1. Selig Harrison, "The Challenge to Indian Nationalism", Foreign Affairs, July 1956, p. 627, cites Maharashtra as a case where the conflict between "Marathi Brahmins, the Marathi peasant proprietors and the Mahar untouchables" will increase once the state is unilingual. But these conflicts will be limited to the state level, since caste lines do not usually extend beyond linguistic boundaries, and organised caste interests are generally subsumed by the political parties. Their influence on the policies and commitments of these parties at the national level would be minimal. See L. I. and Susanne Rudolphe, "The Political Role of India's Caste Associations", Pacific Affairs, March, 1960, p. 13.

Bihar, and by numerous small units, such as Vidarbha in Maharashtra. The result would have been a patchwork of non-viable states and continuous demands from minority interests for additional boundaries. Linguistic boundaries have not eliminated the problems of minority groups, but have provided a comparatively rational solution which has the sanction of a long history. They have more or less delineated the fourteen languages recognised by the 1950 Constitution, and, with the establishment of Nagaland and the dormancy of the Punjabi campaign, have divided the federation along permanent and acceptable lines.

If the creation of linguistic states has made the regional governments more powerful, if for no other reason they are not split into linguistic factions, it has not made the federation an unstable one. Congress has regained its majorities in the states and maintained its huge majority at the centre, and this gives India, if nothing else, stability. Many regional grievances, which were exploited and exacerbated by the Communists, were linguistic, and have now been satisfied. The effect on the states themselves has been to enhance their position as federal units under a strongly centralised constitution. This invigoration of provincial regimes has produced the parochial tendencies deplored by the national leaders. But if the state governments and leaders are more narrow, more self-seeking and less idealistic than their national counterpart, they are also more realistic, and in closer touch with the

true forces in Indian society. By narrowing the gap between the mass of population and the government, they may be able to translate the sophisticated development plans into programmes properly geared to local needs, and, in return, to form government policy in accordance with popular demand rather than in the face of it.

The danger remains that the stronger state regimes will be run by leaders who, by failing to carry out land reform, to ensure fairly equal distribution of development funds, to weaken the grip of moneylenders and caste restrictions, and so on, will sustain a traditional status quo. Further study of regional, rather than central, politics will reveal the extent to which this has happened. Meanwhile, the "tall men" of the nationalist era are disappearing from the seats of government and party power in Delhi. As they are replaced, and they are being replaced even now, by men whose careers and values are shaped by state politics, the significance of the linguistic states will be felt throughout all of India for a long time to come.

NORTH & WESTERN INDIA

STATE BOUNDARIES BEFORE
1956 REORGANIZATION

SCALE
1" = 120 MI.

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