

PUNJABI SUBA

THE STORY OF THE STRUGGLE

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By
AJIT SINGH SARHADI

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DEDICATED TO
THOSE
KNOWN AND UNKNOWN
WHO
SUFFERED FOR THE CAUSE

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PREFACE

The story is, in the main, an account of events beginning with the birth and rise of religious and political consciousness in the Sikhs about their role and status in the Indian society and Indian polity. This appreciation came in after the 'dark period' in their history, which followed the fall of the Sikh Kingdom, when hostile forces fought to eliminate the entity and existence of this small community. Somebody has correctly said, that today's history was yesterday's politics, which, when subjected to deep analysis and fierce light of public criticism, rolls into history. It was politics of the time that forced this dynamic people to extricate themselves from the whirlpool of currents and cross-currents at a critical period to establish their existence. The Sikhs emerged successful by sheer force of their character and energy. This has been the historic background of their resurgence. I have attempted to record this briefly in these pages.

Then came their part in that important period of the Indian history, when transference of power took place from Britain to India. The stand of the Sikhs was honest and honourable. Their leadership never deviated from the correct path, whether it was earlier during the struggle for independence or at the crucial stage. Their contribution in this regard was admittedly out of proportion to their number and strength in the population. The story briefly deals with this also.

The plot of the whole story, however, is the struggle of the spirit of man towards the achieving of a great purpose, which Acton called "Freedom". It had been the freedom of the country and also freedom for the Sikh people from shackles that were being thrown around them. It had been a hard and bitter struggle—unprecedented in the annals of the history of India. It began with the great holocaust and culminated with the carving out of a "Homeland" for these people.

I had the good fortune to play a small part in the struggle which gave me an opportunity to watch the course of men and

PREFACE

There is no doubt that an attempt to write contemporary history is a difficult task surcharged with the risk of misjudgment and prejudicial approach, when one has no opportunity of reappraisal of and reflection over the doings of the principal actors. Therefore, contemporary historian can be sometimes dubbed as a mere journalist, but when the approach of the writer is honest and dispassionate and supported by documents and writings of the time, the work must be judged on its own merits.

It is also necessary that record must be left of the doings of the actors of the time, big or small, in the events of such magnitude so that future research scholars and writers may have the material and opportunity to pass judgment over them. Truth must be told. I have written without fear or favour what I had observed.

This story is not history. It is a chronicle of events chronologically compiled.

AUTHOR

Acknowledgments

The material for this 'Story' relating to the Punjabi Suba 'Morcha' of 1955 and 1960 was collected with the help of S. Bhan Singh to whom I am obliged.

I am grateful to my niece Miss Neena Singh and my friend S. Gurdit Singh Bedi for their pains in checking up the proofs.

The publisher have done a marvelous job in so expeditiously bringing out this book for which I record my thanks.

AUTHOR

events. This story is a humble attempt to record that also. I wish it had been done by some abler hand.

It is correct that great events leave behind their trail of misery and more often of painful recollections. The coming up of a "Homeland of the Sikhs" has created an impression in certain sections of the Muslims in Pakistan, that the migration of the Sikhs from West Pakistan with and consequent to the partition of the country and the subsequent disturbances in East Punjab were part of a deliberate plan by the Sikh leadership. Chaudhry Mohammad Ali, once Prime Minister of Pakistan in 1955 and 1956 writes in his book (published in 1967), "The Emergence of Pakistan" that, "The 1946 massacre of Muslims in Bihar was the first organised effort of extermination of opponents over a wide area, but even the orgy of destruction had no long-term objective in view and quickly exhausted itself. The Punjab massacres planned by the Sikhs were not only on a far larger scale; they differed in kind from all previous civil disorders. They had a defined political objective, and to gain it, uncontrolled violence and terror was used. The Sikhs organised a military campaign that would end only when its objective was attained. They had at their disposal the trained armed forces of Hindu and Sikh States and had planned to start the massacre at a time when the administration of East and West Punjab would be in the throes of reorganisation and, therefore, least capable of effective action. This last factor was decisive." This, however, is totally wrong. I happened to be at Lahore in those days on an assignment with one of the Sikh States and was aware of all the moves by the Akali leadership to provide safety to the Sikh minority in isolated pockets in West Punjab. There was never a plan of the nature. I have tried to meet this charge in these pages.

Feelings persist in a section of the Hindus in this country also that the demand of a linguistic State for Punjabi was in fact a veiled move to have a Sikh State. Khushwant Singh even writes, that the "demand for the Suba was in fact for a Sikh State; language was only the sugar coating." This, again, is entirely incorrect inference. These pages make an effort to controvert this premise.

THE SIKH RESURGENCE AND EMERGENCE OF THE AKALI DAL

I

It was a one man's rule under Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Certainly, he had welded and forged the diverse factions and groups in the Sikhs into one strong nation, but with loyalty and obedience to his person alone. There was no political consciousness uniting the people. There was no ideology or deep religious feelings either to make them one. With his death ended an era during which the history of Punjab had been re-written, and Punjab had become a very powerful State extending its sway to Jamrud and Jallalabad, reversing its role in past centuries. The death of Ranjit Singh left Punjab without a second man to come to the helm of affairs. The Sikh kingdom built in 40 years fell like a house of cards. Princes, the sons of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the aristocracy were swayed by factionism and dissensions resulting in chaos and anarchy. A reign of terror followed the disintegration and disruption of the Sikh oligarchy. The major factions that ultimately came to the forefront in the struggle for power were the Dogras on the one hand and the Sikh aristocracy comprising of the Sandhwalias, Attariwalas and Majithias on the other.

It was after a terrible blood bath that Maharaja Dalip Singh came to the throne with Hira Singh Dogra as his Chief Minister. The Dogras had come into power. The selfishness

fed Brahmins, consulted astrologers, and sooth sayers and compelled widows to immolate themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands. Among certain sections, notably the Bedis, the caste to which Guru Nanak had belonged, the practice of killing female children on birth had been revived.

"As soon as power passed out of Sikh hands, large numbers of Hindus who had adopted the practices of the Khalsa abandoned them to return to orthodox Hinduism. With them went a considerable number of those who had been Khalsa for several generations. In the two short visits that Lord Dalhousie made to the Punjab he was able to detect this tendency. "Their great GOOROO Govind sought to abolish caste and in a great degree succeeded," noted the Governor General. "They are, however, gradually relapsing into *Hindooism*; and even when they continue Sikhs, they are yearly Hindooified more and more; so much so, that Mr. (now Sir) Geo. Clerk (Governor of Bombay 1847-48) used to say that in 50 years the sect of the Sikhs will have disappeared. There does not seem to be warrant for this view, though it is much more likely now than six months ago."

This was not to be, and the Sikhs were not to disappear from the pages of History as situation changed, since that, enabling the Sikh aristocracy and peasantry to share the power with the British, though at a lower level. There had been a feeling of antagonism in the Punjab peasantry, particularly the Sikh soldiery disbanded and dispersed after the second Sikh War and spread throughout the Punjab, against the 'Purbias' as the U.P. Hindus were then known, for the loss of the Sikh kingdom being mercenary Sepoys of the invading British for the subjugation of the Sikhs. They were looked down upon as equally responsible. Trouble had been brewing throughout the country due to the prevalent dissatisfaction at the measures taken by the Britishers. The Indian sepoy in the army had been particularly affected by the orders forbidding the wearing of caste marks etc., which was looked upon by them as an infringement of religious rights. Other classes of Indians also, the princes and the aristocracy, in the rest of the country, had felt insulted and slighted by measures which

and self-aggrandisement of the ruling faction drove the Sikhs to a conflict with their neighbours, the British Rulers, ultimately ending in subjugation of the Sikhs and annexation of Punjab to the British Kingdom. It was the darkest period in Sikh history. The annexation of Punjab, however, created serious problems for the British Rulers. Lord Dalhousie, then the Governor General assessed the situation thus, "There never will be peace in Punjab so long as its people are allowed to retain the means and opportunity of making war. There never can be now any guarantee for the tranquility of India until we shall have effected the entire subjection of the Sikh people and destroyed its power as an independent nation." There were two ways to subjugate the Sikhs—the most virile and dynamic people in the entire country—either to exterminate them or to conciliate them. Extermination of such large numbers was an impossibility and the only other alternative was conciliation. It was under such circumstances that the British Rulers adopted a policy of conciliation and for the purpose the two brothers, John Lawrence and Henry Lawrence were posted in Punjab. Differences between them ultimately brought the reins of Administration into the hands of John Lawrence who stuck to the policy of conciliation.

The Sikhs had lost the political power, but socially and religiously too, important factors had crept in. Disintegration followed political subjugation and this is described very well by Khushwant Singh, the Sikh historian who writes: "The most important effect of annexation was the new relationship between the Sikhs and the Hindus. It has already been noted that, from the time the Khalsa became a political power, large numbers of Hindus, who had looked upon it as the spearhead of Hinduism, had nominally accepted the pahl (baptism). During the Sikh rule the distinction between Sikh and Hindu became one of mere form; the Khalsa wore their hair and beards unshorn, the Hindus did not. For the rest, Brahmanical Hinduism had come back into its own. The new Sikh Jat nobility aped the practices of Hindu Rajput princes; they worshipped Hindu Gods along-side their own Granth, venerated the cow, went on pilgrimages to Hindu holy places,

fed Brahmins, consulted astrologers, and sooth sayers and compelled widows to immolate themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands. Among certain sections, notably the Bedis, the caste to which Guru Nanak had belonged, the practice of killing female children on birth had been revived.

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affected them. It was in such conditions that violence started in different parts by different elements which ultimately took the shape of mutiny. It was at Meerut that the sepoy's murdered their white officers on the 10th May, 1857, and marched to Delhi announcing the rule of Bahadur Shah as Emperor. This news spread throughout the country, and the civilians also joined the sepoy's in attacking cantonments and other British institutions. The move at one time appeared to be national, but there was no common objective in bringing Hindus and Muslims together. The grievances of the different sections and elements were individual, and in the absence of national consciousness, there could be no national rising as such. The British Rulers exploited not only the anti 'Purbia' feelings in the Sikhs, but also the situation that the Delhi mutineers had proclaimed the restoration of the Mughal Rule which, to the Sikh mind at that time, reminded them of the Mughal atrocities committed on the Sikhs during an earlier period. It was also given out by the British Rulers that the fates had decreed and that it had been prophesied in the 'Sau Sakhi' that the Sikhs and the British would conquer Delhi. The co-operation of the Sikh princes was also sought and obtained, and the Sikh aristocracy also came to the help of the Britishers fighting shoulder to shoulder with them against the mutineers. It was in such circumstances that Sikh soldiery was in the fore-front of the attack on Delhi and its recapture in September, 1857.

It is incorrect to say that the mutiny of 1857 was a war of 'independence' as it is sought to be made out by a section of historians or it was a national struggle against foreign rulers. The outcome of the mutiny, however, was that the Armed Forces in the country were thrown open for recruitment to the Sikhs from the Sikh peasantry, and a plan was drawn making soldiery an honourable profession for the Jat Sikhs. Some time later Sikhs of the lower caste, Mazhabis and Ramdasias, were also allowed to be recruited, thus giving an opportunity to the Sikh peasantry and Sikh aristocracy to rehabilitate themselves in the power politics of the State. It was only then, that the area of Haryana was added to Punjab as a

punishment ; and the new administrative unit of Punjab was created consisting of two linguistic groups which even had different cultures. This merger was to create difficulties later in the history of the State. The Act of 1861 provided a Council as *an Advisory Body for the Punjab to which Maharaja of Patiala* was nominated as a member. The British Rulers, however, kept the Gurdwaras, which ever remained the source and fountain of Sikh feelings, sentiments and traditions ever, under their direct control. The Golden Temple and the Akal Takhat, the holiest of the holies to the Sikhs, and also other important Gurdwaras and institutions were taken into control by the administration and run through their agents. Whereas the Auquaf Act of the time permitted the Hindu and Muslim religious places of worship and institutions to be run by the community concerned, the Sikh places of religious worship of historical importance were kept under its own control by the administration. Sikh feelings revolted against this. Hindu interference and Hindu priesthood had crept in during the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh also, but after the annexation of Punjab, Hindu priesthood found an opportunity to rehabilitate themselves in the Sikh places of religious worship and began to guide the Sikh ceremonies and rites. The old simplicity laid down and directed by the Gurus had come to be warped by the Hindu complexities and rituals and even the idols of Hindu deities had come to be installed in most of the Sikh religious places.

The Nirankari movement was the first Reformist movement, purely religious in character, started against the induction of Hindu religious practices into the Sikh system of worship. It emphasised the recitation of Nirankar, and faith in the oneness of God and elimination of the worship of several deities. This movement owed its inception to Sant Baba Dyal Singh, the religious head, who propagated the revival of simplicity, austerity and purity in rituals and ceremonies as laid down and directed by the Gurus. This movement spread throughout the length and breadth of Punjab. It has started from Peshawar but later it shifted to Rawalpindi, then an important town in Pothohar area. The centre of activity of this movement was Gurdwara

Peshawarian which had been granted a Jagir by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who, on his return from the conquest of Jamrud had met Baba Dyal Ji in 1833. The movement was looked upon with suspicion by the British agents and the Gurdwara Peshawarian at Rawalpindi was occupied; but the Nirankari movement maintained its existence by shifting to another place outside the town. This movement kept the spirit of Sikhism alive despite the influence of Brahminism and priesthood that was trying to absorb it.

The Namdhari movement another Reformist movement, however, had a greater impact on the Sikhs in the middle of nineteenth century and later. Bhai Ram Singh, the founder of the movement, was at one time in the regiment of Kanwar Nauhah Singh, and was stated to have visited Peshawar in 1838 when Kanwar was posted there. He was stated to have been baptised by Balak Singh Ji at Hazro, from whom he drew his inspiration. He remained in service in the Sikh regiment during the Sikh Rule, but left it in 1845 after the First Sikh War. It was then that he initiated the movement, laying emphasis on faith in one God, adoption of simplicity and austerity in ceremonies laid down by the Sikh Gurus, absolute necessity of getting oneself baptised according to Sikh traditions, and the elimination of idol worship and removal of Hindu rituals from religious places. This was one part of his mission and his preachings, but there was another too, which dealt with social conduct, and in that regard he laid emphasis on the boycott of the British courts, the British postal system, foreign cloth, and non-cooperation with all that was British. It was first movement of the kind with political aspects in the Sikhs after the annexation. This organisation grew because of its appeal to the Sikh outlook on life, both religious and social and found a large number of followers throughout the 'State of Punjab. The State was divided into five 'Subas' and later into 17 when the movement grew. The main Subas amongst others were those of Amritsar, Sialkot, Jullundur, Ferozepore, Ludhiana, Ambala, Karnal, Malerkotla, Nabha and Patiala and the movement was run through the Suba (Head) of each area. This movement drew the attention of the British Rulers

because of its political aspect. At one time, Baba Ram Singh was interned in his village of Bhaini Sahib, which was the Headquarters of the movement. An excuse was found to suppress the movement when a batch of the Namdhari youngsters attacked some butchers at Malerkotla in order to stop cow slaughter which was a part of the movement. The result was that 48 Kukas, as the followers of Bhai Ram Singh were then known, were blown tied to the cannon mouth on 17th of January, 1878, in village Jamalpur in Malerkotla State by the Deputy Commissioner Ludhiana and another 13 were blown in the same manner by the Commissioner of Ambala the next day. Baba Ram Singh was exiled and interned in Rangoon.

The two movements, Nirankari and the Namdhari, had infused true religious spirit amongst the Sikhs. They furrowed the ground and prepared the soil for Sikh resurgence and revival ! the seed which was to be sown was found in the Singh Sabha movement that took its birth in the eighties of the last century. The two movements had created a general feeling among, all sections of the people that some common organisation was called for, to usher in a new era of socio-religious Reformation. It was, however, the intensive proselytising activities of the Christian Mission working in Punjab that ultimately goaded the Sikh intelligentsia to form the new organisation known as the Sri Guru Singh Sabha.

The conquest and annexation of Punjab by the British had brought with it the Christian Missions, which had opened different centres in the Punjab. The first centre had been opened in Lahore in 1849, followed by another at Amritsar in 1851 where a Christian Missions School was also started. A network of Christian Missions were opened in different districts including Peshawar, Narowal, Multan Jullundur, Batala and other places. The conversion of Maharaja Dalip Singh to Christianity, while in England gave an impetus to the movement of these Christian Mission which had the patronage of Sir John Lawrence, the head of the State. He was reported to be contributing Rs. 500/- p.m. from his personal pocket to the proselytising activities of these Christian

Missions. Maharaja Dalip Singh was also made to contribute an annuity in the aid of the Punjab Missions. The conversion of a member of the Sikh ruling family of Kapurthala also helped the spread of Christianity in Punjab. Many important members of Sikh aristocracy were drawn to what they called liberal views, and deviated from the Sikh path. Many families started sending their children to the Christian Mission Schools, which impelled the Sikh intelligentsia to do something to counter the activities of the Christian Missionaries. The immediate cause of the creation of the first Singh Sabha was the reported conversion of four Sikh boys in the Christian Mission School at Amritsar in 1873 which led to an agitation. It was then that the first meeting was called of a few members of Sikh intelligentsia including Kanwar Bikram Singh of Kapurthala, Bawa Khem Singh Bedi of Kollar, Thakar Singh Sandhawalia and Giani Gian Singh—all prominent public men then. They laid the foundation of the Singh Sabha Movement, which was to have the following objectives :

- (i) Restoration of Sikh rituals and elimination of other religious practices.
- (ii) Propagation of the Sikh religion as directed by the Sikh Gurus.
- (iii) Publication and distribution of Sikh religious literature on the above lines.
- (iv) Up-lift of the Punjabi language.
- (v) Opening of Sikh colleges and schools for the purpose of giving education to the youths in Sikh traditions and the Sikh way of life.
- (vi) Avoidance of all politics from the movement.
- (vii) Keeping the membership of the Singh Sabhas open to the Sikhs alone and not enrolling the Patits, unless they expiate and re-embrace Sikhism.
- (viii) That nothing disparaging and derogatory to other religions and faiths would be preached.

The two other points in their programme related to authorising the management to permit enrolment of those among the ruling classes who had sympathy with the objectives of the movement.

The society soon after started a paper, a monthly organ first of its kind under the name and designation of Vidyachar. Few schools were opened under the name and designation of Khalsa Schools in Lahore and other places. The movement gained momentum with the passage of time, though it slackened at Amritsar due to the differences between Thakar Singh Sandhwalia and Bawa Khem Singh Bedi on an ideological issue as the later (Baba Khem Singh Bedi) did not subscribe to the very progressive views of Thakar Singh Sandhwalia. The emergence, however, of the very energetic and dynamic personality in Professor Bhai Gurmukh Singh gave a fillip to the movement. Bhai Gurmukh Singh belonged to a poor family of Kapurthala, was a self-made man and a protege of Kanwar Bikram Singh with whom he used to attend the Singh Sabha meetings at Amritsar. He rejuvenated the movement at Lahore with the support of Kanwar Bikram Singh and Thakar Singh Sandhwalia and the first meeting of the Singh Sabha, Lahore, was held at Gurdwara Janamasthan on 12th October, 1879. The Oriental College had been started at Lahore in 1876. Professor Gurmukh Singh was able to get the Punjabi language introduced for study in that institution in 1878. He also started the first paper in Punjabi, "Gurmukhi Akhbar" at Lahore in 1880 which initially had only 250 subscribers. He moved about the State in order to form Siri Guru Singh Sabhas in the different districts, and within a short period was able to have branches at Gujranwala, Wazirabad, Sialkot, Gurdaspur, Ferozepore, Kapurthala, Ludhiana, Ambala and Patiala. Another Sikh worker who contributed to the formation of these societies was Harsa Singh, who was a colleague of Bhai Gurmukh Singh. These two gentlemen started the 'Punjabi Parcharni Sabha' in 1882 entirely devoted to the teaching and the spread of Punjabi in the Gurmukhi script, and noted personalities who were helpful in this direction were Sodhi Hukam Singh, Bhai Rattan Singh, S. Arjan Singh, Bhai Mian Singh and Lala Nanak Bakhsh. They even attempted to open Punjabi college at Lahore but failed due to financial difficulties.

Initially, the Singh Sabha movement and the Arya Samaj

movement worked side by side to counter the activities of Christian Missionaries. But with the visit of Swami Daya Nand to Punjab, a split came in. It was thereafter that the Singh Sabha movement had to fight on two fronts, the proselytising activities of the Arya Samaj among the Sikhs and against the Christian Missionaries. Jawahar Singh, a very noted and enthusiastic worker was the Secretary of the Lahore branch of the Arya Samaj and another Sehajdhari Sikh, Bhai Ditt Ram, who after being baptised to Sikhism came to be known as Giani Ditt Singh, was preacher of the Arya Samaj. It was after the split that both these gentlemen became the main pillars of the Singh Sabha movement. Bhai Gurmukh Singh with the support of Jawahar Singh started the first Khalsa press in 1883 for which he had been given a donation of Rs. 7000/- by Maharaja Hira Singh of Nabha. The activities of the Singh Sabhas were not only limited to the propagation of the Sikh religion alone and restoration of Sikh rituals, but extended to the educational sphere also. The greatest contribution in this regard was by Baba Khem Singh Bedi who was running about 40 girls' schools in 1879 teaching Punjabi in Gurmukhi script to the female students. The Khalsa Tract Society was started under the auspices of the Siri Gura Singh Sabha in 1884 to devote itself entirely to the publication of small tracts and other literature propagating the tenets of Sikh religion. The greatest contribution in this regard was made by Giani Sardul Singh and Dr. Charan Singh.

It was soon felt that a socio-political organisation was also necessary to take up the grievances of the Sikhs and the first meeting of Chief Khalsa Dewan was held at Lahore on 30 Chet 1942 (Samat) i.e. 1887. The objectives of the organisation were declared to be not only religious but also social and political. In fact, the Chief Khalsa Dewan was the first socio-religio-political organisation among the Sikhs, which included in its programme not only a revival of the Sikh way of life and the removal of social evils, but also the voicing of political grievances and injustices to the community. It was a liberal organisation toeing the line of the Rulers and at the same time bringing the grievances of the community to their notice by

way of memorials, representations and resolutions in their yearly conferences. The Chief Khalsa Dewan formed the first "Education Committee" on 30th October, 1902, of which Bhai Arjan Singh was elected as the President and Sunder Singh Majithia as the Secretary. It was this Committee of the Chief Khalsa Dewan that thereafter spearheaded the movement to open colleges and schools throughout Punjab. There was not one district in Punjab in 1921, where there was not a Khalsa High School, and quite a number of Khalsa Colleges had been opened throughout the Province.

The Singh Sabha Movement had spread to such a large extent amongst the Sikhs that the Chief Khalsa Dewan, as the Chief Organiser of this movement, embarked on its programme of sending missionaries outside the Punjab as well. The first batch of the Missionaries was sent to tour the Sind area of Bombay presidency in 1807. The intensification in the activities of the Chief Khalsa Dewan brought the organisation to the notice of British Rulers who were simultaneously watching the revolutionary activities in the post-partition period of Bengal which had given birth to the National Movement. An interesting commentary has appeared recently purporting to be from the Assistant Director of Criminal Intelligence, Government of India for the period 1900 to 1911, published in the Gurdwara Gazette of April 1969, annotated by S. Nahar Singh M.A., which throws a flood of light on the resurgent movement in the Sikhs during that period. It was a long report discussing the activities and the movements among the Sikhs. It summarises the activities of the period thus :—

"Nevertheless a perusal of past records proves conclusively that the Sikhs have all along had among their ranks a leavening of disaffected and even actively disloyal persons. The fanatical Kuka sect among the Sikhs was overtly hostile to the British supremacy and had to be put down with a strong hand. In the early eighties the rumoured advent of Dalip Singh in India had decidedly an unsettling effect on a large section of the Sikhs whose hopes ran high of again seeing their rule established in the Punjab. Of this statement there is ample concrete evidence to be found among contemporary records—

books, hand bills and speeches ; there is also the fact that a village in the Lahore district refused to pay its land revenue, saying that tribute was due only to their King who was shortly to arrive in India. The expulsion from the Khalsa Dewan of the author of the admittedly objectionable work, the *Khurshaid-i-Khalsa* (see paragraph 10) was opposed by no less influential Sikhs than the Raja of Faridkot and Baba Khem Singh. This work appeared about 1885 and there is evidence on record to show that in two regiments enlisting Sikhs, subscriptions were collected to aid the bringing out of a second edition. Bearing these facts in mind, as also the remarkable advance of Indian political life and thought during the subsequent twenty years, it is in no wise surprising that the Sikhs did not remain un-affected by the wave of disloyal unrest which swept over the Punjab in 1907.

"The notorious agitator, Ajit Singh, was a Jat Sikh of the Jullundur district, and the many inflammatory speeches which he delivered were listened to by, among others, large numbers of Sikhs. After his deportation, there were discovered in circulation Gurmukhi letters expressing sympathy with the agitator. Sikh sepoys were observed among some of the audiences gathered at various political meetings held by Ajit Singh or others of his followers and it is known that one or two Sikh soldiers actively participated in the agitation. A Sikh barrister was one of the principal accused in the Rawalpindi riots case. Again, when Mr. Gokhale visited the Punjab in the Spring of 1907, he associated with and was feted by, various persons in Lahore whose names were certainly not then synonymous with loyalty or good-will towards Government. When he visited the Khalsa College, apparently on the invitation of some of the staff, the horses were taken out of his carriage by the students who dragged it to the college ; and finally, he lectured in the College Dharamsala from which Granth Sahib was specially removed to make room for him. The "Khalsa Advocate" newspaper of Amritsar, which is the organ of the Chief Khalsa Dewan and the recognised mouth piece of the educated Sikhs, took to publishing extracts from the seditious Gaelic American newspaper and had to be warned for reproducing in June, 1907, an

article likely to cause discontent among native sepoy and to rouse disaffection against the Government. During the quieter years which have succeeded 1907, there is ample evidence, apart from the conduct of the Chief Khalsa Dewan and Khalsa College, which will be presently examined in detail, to prove that the members of sedition are still smouldering in certain quarters. The objectionable Gurmukhi newspapers appeared during 1909, one the 'Prem' of Ferozepore and the other the 'Sacha Dhandora' of Lyallpur. Both these prints were largely echoes of the violently nationalistic writings which were then appearing in the Punjab press and which culminated in a series of press prosecutions during 1909-10. They have now ceased to appear. Moreover the Editor of the 'Prem' commenced to render into Gurmukhi a series of the seditious books and pamphlets which emanated from Ajit Singh and the *Bharat Mata Gang of Lahore*. One pamphlet was actually published but the author was thereupon called on to deliver up all copies in his possession under pain of prosecution. From America it has been reported that several ex-sepoy have publicly burnt their medals and discharge certificates and, as the report appeared in a nationalist paper, there is no reason to suppose that their conduct has been misrepresented. There is also sufficient evidence available to prove that a spirit of anti-British disaffection is commonly prevalent among Sikhs in Canada. A young Sikh Barrister of Amritsar, Harnam Singh of a good family, was a prominent inmate of the India House in London. He was expelled from Cirencester Agricultural College for wearing a mutiny badge in memory of the "Martyrs" of 1857, which he refused to remove at the request of the Principal; he was eventually called to the Bar in England but the Punjab Chief Court has, on a consideration of his past history, refused to allow him to practise as an Advocate. In 1910, a sowar of a certain Indian Cavalry regiment was dismissed from service for subscribing to the *Swarajya Newspaper* of Allahabad, a journal of which no fewer than four editors have been convicted for publishing seditious matter. Finally, an impasse was reached in Patiala affairs in October 1910 which resulted in the summary dismissal, under the orders of

His Excellency the Viceroy, of both the Prime Minister and the Commander-in-Chief. Not only were the activities of the officials and their following inimical to the interests of the Patiala State as such, but there was also clearly traceable in them a distinct under-current of disloyalty to the British Government."

Again commenting on the conduct of some important Sikh personalities of the time, the Report said :

"Finally, there is the conduct of the Chief Khalsa Dewan leaders, Sunder Singh Majithia and others, who are the controlling centre of the body, are constantly in the company of such persons as Jagat Singh Updeshak, the author of the pictures, and other preachers who are responsible for the type of speeches and writings which have been described. Sunder Singh's constant companions are such men as Tirlochan Singh, Pleader, Vir Singh of the Khalsa Samachar newspaper, Jodh Singh of the Khalsa College and others. The disloyalty of these men is notorious and is admitted on all hands. Yet they tour the country with the Dewan leaders and when Sardar Sunder Singh's son was married, they were honoured guests at the wedding. When the Commissioner of Lahore, who is President of the Khalsa College Council and Managing Committee, was in Amritsar early in 1910, Sardar Sunder Singh did not come to see him for six days, and then left a card, followed by a letter saying that urgent business had called him away from Amritsar. The Commissioner held a durbar, but not a single neo-Sikh attended. Their absence provoked considerable comment among the orthodox Sikhs, as did previously the scant ceremony shown to the Deputy Commissioner when he attended one day the Educational Conference held at Amritsar in 1910."

These parts from the report 'approved by the Government of India' through the Director of Intelligence reflect the awakening of the Sikhs during that period, not only in the social and religious field but also in the political field. The very persons suspected of disloyalty at the time played a very prominent part in the politics of Punjab later.

There was another aspect which was indicative of the drive

of the Sikhs during that period. The economic conditions in the country were very distressing in the early years of the present century, the wages were low, the unemployment was extensive. There was no incentive from the British Ruler, in the industrial and in the agricultural field. Canada had just emerged after the dispute between the French and the British colonists as a united country and had embarked on the path of Industrial growth for which it needed labour from outside. The United States of America too suffered from shortage of labour and welcomed foreign labour at that time. Therefore, many Indians started going to these countries. In this exodus, nearly ten thousands Indians settled down in Vancouver in Canada, of which 90% were Sikhs from Punjab by 1910. This wave of migration had just accelerated when the Canadian Government felt apprehensive of the increase in number of the brown population and imposed a restriction on migration of certain categories of people. The immigration of large number of Japanese and Chinese had generated anti-Asiatic feelings, which became more pronounced against the Sikhs who had the distinctive characteristic of turban and beard and who were more dynamic than the rest. But legal implications were involved in stopping of immigration of the Sikhs, as they were British subjects. Nevertheless, legislation was undertaken by the Canadian authorities to stop their immigration and the Government of India too was helpful to the Canadian authorities in this matter. The orders issued by the Canadian Government provided that an immigrant coming straight from the port of embarkation could land on the Canadian coast only provided he carried 200 dollars with him. By that time, a large number of Sikhs had not only settled in Canada and U.S.A., but a large number had also migrated to Malaya, Hong Kong and other small States in South-East Asia. The orders of the Canadian Government affected only the Indians, since the Japanese and Chinese with the help of their Governments had facilities in regard to the embarkation. It was difficult for Indians as they had to board ships of the foreign lines, which would not go straight from Indian ports to Canada. Therefore, one Gurdit Singh, later distinguished as Baba Gurdit

Singh of Kamagatamaru fame, a rich merchant and a trader settled in Malaya sponsored a navigation company known as the "Guru Nanak Navigation Company" at Hong Kong in 1913 and undertook to carry passengers direct from the Indian ports to Canada. He was able to secure 500 passengers but was arrested by the British authority at Hong Kong. After a legal battle, he was able to secure his release and sailed for Canada on a ship named 'Kamagatamaru' with 370 Indian passengers on board out of whom 351 were Sikhs. The ship reached Vancouver on May 23, 1914, and though all the conditions of a through Journey had been complied with, yet the passengers were not allowed to land causing great hardship to the passengers for nearly 2 months, when the ship remained outside the port. Baba Gurdit Singh had to turn back and reached Calcutta where the ship was searched for arms and the passengers were ordered to board the train that had been kept ready for their being transported back to Punjab. Muslim passengers obeyed the order of the Government, but the Sikhs refused having been so badly treated earlier, and formed themselves into a procession with a view to going to the town with Guru Granth Sahib, their holy book at the head of the procession. They were surrounded by the British troops and when one of the sergeants interfered high handedly, a skirmish ensued in which 19 Sikhs were killed along with two European Officers. Some were arrested but others escaped, including Baba Gurdit Singh; who avoided arrest for 7 years when he appeared on Guru Nanak birth day in 1921 at Nankana Sahib, and offered himself for arrest. The heroic deed of the 'Kamagatamaru' men had won admiration and support of the entire country and these persons who had escaped arrest constituted the nucleus of the revolutionary movement later in Punjab.

The Sikhs settled in Canada and U.S.A. were quite organised and had founded a Khalsa Dewan Society with branches all over in important towns where they were concentrated, and had built Gurdwaras at several places which had become the centres of the activities and mutual consultations amongst themselves. A Gurdwara had been built at Vancouver, and another at Victoria in Canada and one had been built at Stockton,

in U.S.A. The battle against this discrimination by the whites against the Asians, particularly, against the Sikhs, started from these religious places. Besides, other societies like the 'Hindustan Association' and the 'United Indian League' had sprung up for which also these Gurdwaras were the places for meetings and deliberations. Quite a number of these migrants had been soldiers or policemen at one time under the British and had undergone a great deal of sufferings, and yet remained loyal. Therefore, it was quite a shock to them to find that they were being discriminated against. The Sikh migrants were mostly not very literate and they had to take Hindu public men who knew English like Hardial and Lala Lajpat Rai as the leaders in their movement. Kartar Singh Sarabha was one of the Sikh leaders and Jowala Singh and Sohan Singh Bhakna were others who headed their movement against the British through the organisation created for the purpose under the name and designation of the 'Ghadar Party'. This party started its own paper named 'Ghadar' which pronounced the objective of the party thus: "Today, there begins in a foreign land but in our country language, a war against the British Raj.....What is our name? 'Ghadar'. What is our work? Ghadar. Where will Ghadar break out? In India. The time will come when rifles and blood will take the place of pen and ink." In another issue of the same paper, it was given out: "The Germans have great sympathies with our movement for liberty because they and ourselves have a common enemy (the English). In the future, Germany can draw assistance from us and they can render us great assistance also."² Most of these leaders of the Indian immigrants shifted their activities to the U.S.A. when Canada as the member of the British Common Wealth entered the First World War. Several meetings of the Indians, mostly Sikhs, took place at different places, wherein it was decided to extend the movement to the Indian soil and rouse the people in India to revolt against the British Rulers. Jowala Singh and Sohan Singh Bhakna took the initiative and spearheaded the movement. The first batch that left for India was addressed thus, "Your duty is clear. Go to India, stir up rebellion in every corner of India.

Rob the wealthy and show mercy to the poor. In this way gain universal sympathy. Arms will be provided to you on your arrival in India. Failing this, you must ransack the police station for rifles. Obey without hesitation the commands of your leaders."⁴ According to Khushwant Singh, nearly a thousand Ghadarites had reached India through Japanese ship and German submarines, but to their great chagrin and disappointment they found that the atmosphere was not at all conducive to their activities. Punjab was supporting the Britishers by giving recruits in large numbers, and the most vocal and enthusiastic supporters were the Sikhs. These Ghadarites did their utmost to exort the people to revolt, but were not successful. They also tried to contact other terrorist organisations in other parts of the country but did not meet with any success. The failure of the movement was partly due to the defective leadership in the United States of America and lack of enthusiasm in India. The leadership also failed the Ghadarites because it had not fully equipped them and also because of the misuse of funds put at their disposal and defalcation therein. Lala Lajpat Rai admitted this in his autobiographical writings when he disclosed, "Most of Bengali revolutionaries, I found absolutely unprincipled both in the conduct of the campaign and in obtaining and spending of funds..... Among the Punjabis the worst cases were of Ram Chandra and Harish Chandra. The Sikhs on the whole proved to be purer, more unselfish and disciplined. The worst possible case amongst them was Bhagwan Singh Giani but he was infinitely superior to Ram Chandra or Chakarvarti or Gupta."⁵

The Headquarter and Centre of activities of this Ghadar Movement was Berlin from where large aid was being sent, but the bickerings amongst the leadership of the Ghadarites and misuse of the funds and the resources contributed to the failure, and there was also lack of response from the people in India. The greatest sufferers were the Sikhs, however, who wherever arrested, were tried and many hanged and others imprisoned. Many of the Ghadarites in the United States of America were also arrested when the U.S.A. joined the war and thus the movement failed. But it had left its impact on the Sikhs in

the sense that it widened their political vision and also gave them the experience of leadership which had miserably failed them.

The successive movements in the Sikhs starting from the sixties of the nineteenth century, particularly the Singh Sabha Movement and the revolutionary activities thereafter, had brought in a political awakening in the masses and also religious reformation with the natural consequence and desire that their important historical religious places, which were in the hands of the Mahants and Hindu priests be brought under the collective control of the community, and their funds utilised for its own benefit. Most of these Mahants and Priests had fallen from the right path of religious duties, and had converted these ecclesiastical assets into private property and had been utilising the funds for a loose life. The simplicity of service in these religious places had given place to extravagant ceremonials.

India was then in the midst of Non-Cooperation Movement which Gandhiji had initiated to resist the repressive measures known as the Rowaltt Act enacted by the British Government in India after the Montague Chelmsford Reforms of 1919. The movement had spread in Punjab with Amritsar as its base, and it was at Amritsar that some Englishmen were murdered by an Indian mob. The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of 13th April, 1919, was the sequel, which spread a wave of extreme anger and hatred amongst the people. It was then that a 'Saropa' was given by the management of Shri Darbar Sahib to General Dyer, the man responsible for the Jallianwala Bagh firing. The grant of 'Saropa' is always an honour conferred on an individual who has rendered distinguished service in the cause of the Panth or for the good of humanity. The conferment of such great honour to General Dyer shocked the Sikh community bringing to their notice the extreme degradation and depravity of the management. A meeting was called, sponsored by students and professors of the Khalsa College, Amritsar, of representatives of Sikhs at Jallianwala Bagh on 12th October, 1920, and it was here for the first time that speeches were made to take measures to free the Gurdwaras from the control of the Mahants. This was the start of the

of their earnings for the Panthic cause. The meeting was held as scheduled, wherein a Committee of 175 was selected and given the name, for the first time, of 'Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee'. The Punjab Government by that time had also set up another committee of its own consisting of 36 Sikhs to manage the Gurdwaras. The newly elected Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, in order to avoid conflict with the official committee, included these 36 members in the non-official 175-member committee.

The first meeting of the 'Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee' was held at the Akal Takhat on 12th December, 1920. The members chose 5 Piaras comprising of Bhat Teja Singh, a Harvard University graduate, Bhai Jodh Singh, then Principal Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Gujranwala, Bawa Harkishan Singh, then a professor at Khalsa College, Amritsar, Bhai Teja Singh of Central Majha Dewan and Balwant Singh a Sikh landlord for drawing up the mode, manner and method of management and the rituals to be followed in the Gurdwaras coming under the management of the Committee. Thereafter, many of the Gurdwaras voluntarily affiliated themselves with this organisation and accepted their control and guidance in their management. The possession of other historical gurdwaras followed. The Gurdwara Sahib 'Babe Di Ber' was taken by Kartar Singh Jhabbar, Teja Singh and Amar Singh and this process continued when the control was taken over of Gurdwara Bhai Joga Singh at Peshawar and Gurdwara 'Sacha Sauda'. These successes intensified the Reform movement, and the control of important Gurdwaras of historical significance spread a wave of satisfaction among the Sikhs. They responded to the new development by coming forward to offer sacrifices for the success of the movement. This encouraged the Sikh leadership to channelise the sentiments and feelings by organising them into a purely political organisation, and it was for this, that the Shiromani Akali Dal was founded on 24th January, 1921.

This organisation was, in a way, the product of the freedom struggle both in the religious and political fields; and this organisation thereafter emerged as the vanguard of the non-Co-operation movement in Punjab. This organisation shared the

views of the Indian National Congress to free India from the shackles of foreign rule. The two organisations, the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, became the representatives of the Sikhs, have continued to be so and hold that status till this day. The Non-Cooperation Movement was at its height in the country. The main plank of the Movement was 'Satyagraha', 'the path of truth' directed by Gandhiji who was at its helm. The Sikhs have their own tradition of suffering without retaliation—laid down far earlier by the Gurus, particularly Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Teg Bahadur—and their leadership adopted the course of suffering in obtaining the control and management of the Gurdwaras from the hands of the Mahants and unscrupulous priests. The first Jatha was sent under the leadership of Kartar Singh Jhabbar to the historic Gurdwara of Tarn Taran in Amritsar, with the direction to remain absolutely peaceful and non-violent and act. The Mahant with his men attacked the Jatha injuring seventeen members and killing two, Bhai Hukam Singh and Bhai Hazara Singh. The Jatha remained absolutely peaceful reciting Shabad and entering the Gurdwara precincts. These two were first martyr of Gurdwara Reform Movement. The Mahant felt repentant and surrendered the possession to the leader who represented the S.G.P.C.

The Gurdwara Reform Movement purely religious in character, was exploited by the Congress to its advantage, as it was running parallel to the Non-Cooperation movement initiated by the Indian National Congress—in fact it was acting like yeast to the Congress Movement. Therefore, the British Rulers made it a point to crush the Gurdwara Reform Movement. It was at that time that the tragedy of Nankana Sahib took place, giving the impression to the Sikhs that it had been inspired by the British Rulers of Punjab. A Jatha of 550 Sikhs under the leadership of Bhai Lachhman Singh, was returning from Chanderkot on its way back to Amritsar, when some members of the Jatha expressed their desire to pay their respect at the Gurdwara Nankana Sahib, the birth place of Guru Nanak. They had no intention or objective of taking possession of the Gurdwara. It was Gurburb Day, the birth

anniversary of Guru Har Rai and the Jatha went inside the Gurdwara to pay its respects. It entered there reciting Shabads when Mahant Narain Dass, the Mahant in control of the Gurdwara directed his men to attack the peaceful Jatha. The Jatha was fired upon and many were shot dead. Many were burnt alive by the hirelings of the Mahant and some were thrown in a boiling oil cauldron. It was apparent that the Mahant had made preparations earlier and it was suspected that these preparations were with the active acquiescence of the authorities. This tragedy flared the already smouldering embers of Sikh discontent at the attitude of the Rulers which burst forth in a huge conflagration that spread throughout the province. It was thereafter that the ranks of the Sikhs were united, and the struggle to free the Gurdwaras got intensified. On the next day another Jatha of 2200 led by Kartar Singh Jhhabar entered the Gurdwara Sri Nankana Sahib and took over its control.

The Nankana Sahib tragedy gave a political complexion to the movement, which otherwise was purely religious and it drew the sympathies of the Indian National Congress leaders. Gandhiji, accompanied by Maulana Shaukat Ali, visited Gurdwara Nankana Sahib to express his sympathy and support. It was then that a meeting of the S.G.P.C. was held on 6th March, 1921, wherein advantage was taken of the injured feelings of the Sikhs and a resolution was sponsored by Professor Mota Singh, which approved and adopted the programme of Non-Cooperation Movement, and gave that movement the unstinted support of the Sikhs. Some of the Sikh leaders at the meeting felt that the Gurdwara Reform Movement should not be given a political colour and it should not align with any political party. Therefore, the resolution was opposed by Jathedar Kartar Singh Jhabbar, Harbans Singh of Attari and Bhai Jodh Singh but it was passed by an overwhelming majority by the excited and jubilant members. This led to a split between the leaders of the Gurdwara Reform Movement. Taking advantage of the split, an order was promulgated by the Punjab Government prohibiting the movement of Jathas to the Gurdwaras. The movement, however, intensified with

the result that it took the shape of Non-Cooperation Movement. In fact, to all intents and purposes it came to be a parallel Non-Cooperation Movement, and the Jathas started courting arrest in their attempt to take possession of the Gurdwaras. The Authorities believed that this movement projected from the Akal Takhat and the precincts of Sri Darbar Sahib had become a part of the Non-Cooperation Movement. This led the Government to take possession of Gurdwara Sri Darbar Sahib and entrust its management to its agents by handing over the keys to them. This further accentuated the struggle, and the satyagraha became more extensive. A demand was made that a statutory elected body be constituted to control the Sikh Gurdwaras. The movement took such a serious turn that the Government was compelled to return the keys of Gurdwara Sri Darbar Sahib to the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee on 19th March, 1922. The unconditional surrender of the keys by the Authorities to the Sikh representatives gave a momentum to the struggle and by that time 2000 Sikh satyagrahis had been arrested in different parts of the province in the Gurdwara Reform Movement. This victory with the surrender of the keys was taken as a political victory in the Non-Cooperation Movement and Gandhiji named it, "First victory in the freedom movement." This announcement was further taken by the British authorities as proof of the fact that the Gurdwara Reform Movement was a part of the Non-Cooperation Movement in the freedom struggle of the country and that, as such, all measures be taken to suppress it. This resulted in further clashes with the authorities.

The Sikhs used to cut fuel wood from a garden known as 'Guru Ka Bagh' which was under the control of one Mahant Sunder Dass. This fuel wood was used in the Lungar (free kitchen) at Sri Darbar Sahib. Mahant Sunder Dass was instigated by the Authorities to seek their aid in stopping this cutting, who, accordingly made the complaint, on which several Sikhs were arrested for cutting fuel wood. This sparked off another movement then known as 'The Guru Ka Bagh Struggle' in which Jathas started towards Guru Ka Bagh

insisting on their right to cut fuel wood, when they were mercilessly beaten by the police and then arrested. More than 1300 satyagrahis were seriously injured and total arrests had reached 5005 without any possibility of settlement. Ultimately Sir Ganga Ram a philanthropist of Lahore took over the garden on lease from Mahant Sunder Dass, and allowed the Sikh satyagrahis to cut fuel wood, thus ending the struggle by conceding the rights to the Sikhs. This was on the 13th October, 1922, when the Sikhs gained another victory. The lease by Sir Ganga Ram had been arranged as a face saving device by the Authorities that they had not surrendered.

Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha had been giving secret help in the Gurdwara Reform Movement, and was suspected of supporting the Akali leadership. He was removed from the Gaddi under the orders of the Government of India on 9th July 1923, obviously for this reason, though his differences with Maharaja of Patiala were announced officially to be the cause. This led to the Shiromani Akali Dal taking up his cause and calling upon the people of Punjab to observe 9th September, 1923, as 'Nabha day' by observing a hartal throughout the province and taking out a protest procession to rouse public opinion. This made the Authorities consider it a serious defiance and 60 members of the S.G.P.C. were arrested on 12th October, 1923 and the Shiromani Akali Dal and also the unofficial body of the 175 members, elected S.G.P.C. were declared illegal bodies. This was the first challenge taken up by the Shiromani Akali Dal, which declared that they would resist the illegal order and, in furtherance of that object, Akhand Path of Siri Guru Granth Sahib was started at Jaito within the jurisdiction of Nabha State. The recitation of Siri Guru Granth Sahib was interfered with under the orders of the British Resident at Nabha, which gave a start to another movement known as 'Jaito Morcha' sponsored by Shiromani Akali Dal. The Jathas started going to Jaito to continue the Akhand Path that had been disturbed. The police resorted to firing, on the first Jatha, under the order of the Resident, killing 50 Satyagrahis. This led to a declaration by the Shiromani Akali Dal that Jathas would move every day to

hold the Akhand Path and face firing and court arrests. This continued for some time and the Authorities had ultimately to give way, and the Akhand Path Bhog ceremony was duly performed and the Jathas were allowed free access to the Gurdwara. This was the third victory in the Gurdwara Reform Movement, the last being directly of the Shiromani Akali Dal, and this raised the morale of the Sikhs leading to the strengthening of the Shiromani Akali Dal.

The Congress leadership had taken a direct interest in the Gurdwara Reform Movement and as far back as December 1921 when the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress at its annual meeting had passed the resolution recording, "with pride and admiration its appreciation of unexampled bravery of the Akalis and great noble example of non-violence by them for the benefit of the whole nation." This sympathy and support from the Congress leadership with the Sikhs in the Gurdwara Reform Movement drew the Sikhs into the Congress fold and made them active participants in the freedom struggle.

The Punjab Government felt the strength of the movement and ultimately agreed to the enactment of the Sikh Gurdwaras Act, 1925, whereby all the historical Gurdwaras were brought under the control of the representatives of the Sikhs elected on the basis of adult franchise and thus the official and statutory *Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee* came into being for the proper management of the Gurdwaras. This was the greatest success in the Gurdwara Reform Movement, though it had entailed tremendous sacrifice on the part of the Sikhs involving arrest of 40,000 satyagrahis, martyrdom of 500 Sikhs, and payment of fine by distress and auction of property worth Rs. 16 lakhs in the movement.

This movement and the consequent victory raised the position of the Shiromani Akali Dal, not only amongst the Sikhs, but throughout the country, and thereafter the Shiromani Akali Dal was in the vanguard of the freedom struggle, fighting the country's battle shoulder to shoulder with the Indian National Congress. The sufferings and sacrifices of the Sikhs in the Gurdwara Reforms struggle had a serious impact on the Sikh

masses in the country side. The police excesses at the 'Guru Ka Bagh', the Jaito firing, the arrests of the leaders and their protracted trials, all this accumulatively engendered violent thinking in a section of the Sikhs. The ground had already been prepared in Punjab as a result of the Ghadar activities and the sufferings of those who had returned from foreign soil. The Babbar Akali Movement, 1923, was the natural sequel of the Gurdwara Reform Movement. These Babbars (lions) had been to a large extent keen members of or sympathisers with the Ghadar party. They adopted violent means to rid the country of the foreign rulers. They were led by one Havaladar Major Kishan Singh, a retired military man and Professor Mota Singh, later an M.L.A. They were a band of patriots who did not believe in the non-violent measures adopted by the Non-Cooperation Movement of the times. This Babbar Akali Movement was of short duration, centred mostly in Jullundur and Hoshiarpur districts, where these patriots displayed extreme courage and an utter disregard for their lives. They terrorised the police to such an extent that it became most unsafe for British Officers to move about and the entire country side came under the control of these Babbar patriots. This movement, however, did not find support in the Congress circles, as the Congress leadership was wedded to non-violence, and it disowned the movement. The movement, however, persisted and there were several instances showing bravery and courage of high order amongst these revolutionaries. On August 31, 1923, four Babbars led by one Karam Singh were surrounded in village Babeli by a large number of police and armed constabulary, and when they refused to surrender, the building was set on fire. They came with drawn kirpans and fell on the charging police and all were shot dead. Such courage had been rarely seen. Even more spectacular was the conduct of one Dhanna Singh who was betrayed by one of his comrades and was manacled at night, while he was asleep, on October 23, 1923. He found himself thus hand-cuffed when he woke up and when he was taken out he managed to explode a hand-grenade which he was carrying in his armpit. He was blasted and torn to bits by this explosion, but at the same time

several policemen, including a British Superintendent of Police, were seriously injured. There were several examples of this kind during the Babbar Akali Movement.

The lack of sympathy, and the statements of the Congress leaders disowning the activities of the Babbar Akalis, led to its liquidation and about 62 Babbars were arrested thereafter, many of whom were sentenced to death and others to long terms of imprisonment. The movement, however, had its effect and helped towards the awakening and the spread of political consciousness in the Sikh peasantry of the Punjab. This also strengthened the leadership, then at the helm of affairs.

Therefore, the Shiromani Akali Dal came to be the only representative organisation of the Sikhs. Its cooperation was sought by the National Congress in all the movements of the freedom struggle, and the cooperation was freely given. The Shiromani Akali Dal played a prominent part in the politics of the country ever since its inception in 1921.

It has been said that the Sikhs had not been able to bring forward leadership of high calibre, capability at critical periods of the country's history, and it was for this reason that Sikh leadership could not utilise opportunities to the advantage of their community at times when it was pitted against more capable leadership of its sister communities, who exploited the Sikhs to their advantage. This may be partly correct, but it must be recalled how Sikhs were situated before the partition of the country. The Sikhs were only 13 per cent of the United Punjab. As a minority, they had 20% share in the services and being dynamic and martial, they were sought in the armed forces of the country. They were courted and wooed by the British Rulers for civil employments also. These advantages and concessions drove the best talent either to the services or to the Army. The Sikh aristocracy was happy and secure in the shadow and protection of the British Rulers enjoying their Jagirs and estates and other positions of vantage and influence. Such state of affairs naturally brought forward in the freedom struggle such leadership as was neither highly educated nor was outstanding in talent and capacity as compared to those from other communities. The slow transfer of power to the

people under democracy gave power to those representatives who had voiced the grievances of the Sikhs, suffered for them, spoke for and on their behalf and as such carried their confidence. A glance at the Sikh leadership of the time would show that many of the representatives had been students of the Sikh Missionary College in the twenties of this century and they were those who had been in the forefront in the Gurdwara Reform Movement and the freedom struggle. It might have been sad state of affairs that many among the Sikhs did not come forward to participate in the heat and hustle of politics but Shiromani Akali Dal came to be under the leadership of men though not very much educated in the modern sense, but who had commonsense of sturdy peasants and could feel the pulse of the people and of the coming events. The leadership might not have been of that intellectual calibre that is called for in the 'leaders' but it had certainly the strength and the will to suffer for a cause but were much too credulous and were, more often than not, easily duped and might have some times failed to appreciate long range effects of some steps. They remained faithful friends of the National Congress till repeated breaches of faith drove them to fight for the very existence of their community. The Sikh leadership did at one stage try to resist the separatist tendencies and moves in the country, but it did not succeed. It was naturally forced to accept the situation that emerged as a result of the acceptance of 'Two Nation Theory' and had to fight to preserve the entity of the Sikhs. How the Congress had been responsible for this has been narrated in the following pages.

References and Notes

- 1 'The History of the Sikhs' by Khushwant Singh p. 96.
- 2 Report by Mr. D. Petrie Assistant Director, Criminal Intelligence Government of India on 'Development in Sikh Politics 1900-11' annotated by S. Nahar Singh M.A. and published in Gurdwara Gazette Amritsar, April 1969.
- 3 Quoted by Khushwant Singh in his book, 'The History of the Sikhs' Vol II., P. 177.
- 4 Quotation from the same book, p 182.
- 5 Autobiographical sketch written by Lajpat Rai, p. 218.

TWO NATION THEORY CONCEIVED

II

Most Indian historians blame the British Rulers and the Muslims of India for the growth of separatist tendencies in the country leading to the emergence of 'Two Nation Theory' which was responsible for India's partition. This may be partly correct. Congress leadership, however, cannot escape the responsibility for this. The Indian National Congress had been founded and formed in 1885 by Hume, an Englishman and his friends, who gave a forum to the upper classes of India for voicing and ventilating their views on the current problems of the country. This organisation slowly gained strength by demanding a share of power by Indians with the Rulers, an introduction of democratic principles and an effective ~~voice~~ ^{voice} the representatives of the people. This naturally forces of apprehension among the educated and vocal classes of British Rulers. They feared that ultimately democracy would and concessions majority and that the power transferred from to the Army. They ruled would be vested in the majority—the the shadow and pro Ahmad Khan sponsored the movement, Jagirs and estates would play an independent role and chalk Such state of affairs not the political set up of the country. The struggle such leadership friends gave for this were that the was outstanding in talent as Hindus were communal in out-look from other communities. A majority at heart. It cannot be

said that Sir Syad Ahmad was not playing the game of British Rulers; and might have been encouraged by them to spearhead such a movement. The British Rulers could not be disinterested in such a move particularly when it was to their advantage.

The fact of the matter was that the ideal and the ideology of separatism seems to have taken inception at the time when Lord Curzon, then Viceroy of India, split the Province of Bengal into two in 1905, creating a majority area for the Muslims. His address at the time to a gathering of the Muslims in Ahsan Manzil, the palace of Nawab of Dacca emphasised this aspect, when he said, "I am giving you a Muslim province." Muslims did not appreciate its significance at that time, but the Hindus leadership did, and they started an intense campaign to undo the partition of Bengal. They ultimately succeeded in getting it undone after 6 years of struggle. This, however, had created an impression on the minds of the Muslim intelligentsia, that Hindus, even the most progressive section amongst them, were more keen on majority rule and Hindu dominance than in turning out the British Rulers and obtaining freedom. The address that Nawab of Dacca gave during his Presidential Speech at the 6th session of the Muslim League was an indication. He said :

"The partition gave us a great opportunity to bestir ourselves and awakened our hearts to the throbbing of a new nationalism which was pulsating through the various sections of our community of East Bengal.....Our ill wishers at once perceived that partition would necessarily bring to the front long neglected claims of the Muslims of East Bengal ; and although we never got more than what was justly our due, the little we regained was loss to them....." This, in fact, showed the trend in the minds of the Muslim intelligentsia which began to feel that the so called progressive movement in the country and the transference of power to the Indians meant communal dominance of the majority calling for and necessitating safeguards for the protection of the Muslim minority. And this was the beginning of the move for separatism, which later grew in strength. There is no denying the fact that the Congress leadership did try to placate these separatist tendencies in the

Muslim minority, with a view to carry them in the freedom movement, and this ultimately ended in recognition of separate electorates in the Constitution of the country by its acceptance in the Congress League Pact of 1916 signed at Lucknow. Sikhs were not made a party to this understanding. Politically, they were nowhere in the picture. The Chief Khalsa Dewan, a Sikh organisation then, had made a representation when separate electorates were granted to the Muslims in 1909 by Lord Minto, the then Viceroy, seeking the same concession for the Sikhs. The Lieutenant Governor of Punjab supported their representation in his recommendations stating that "in the Punjab the Sikh community is of great importance and it should be considered whether any and what measures are necessary to ensure its adequate representation." The Sikhs, however, did not get any recognition at the time nor even in the Lucknow Pact of 1916. It was in the Montague Chelmsford Report in 1919 that the existence of the Sikhs as a political entity was recognised and it was stated, "the Sikhs in the Punjab are a distinct and important people ; they supply a gallant and valuable element to the Indian Army ; but they are everywhere in minority and experience had shown that they go virtually un-represented. To the Sikhs, therefore, and to them alone we propose to extend the system already adopted in the case of the Mohammadans.....". But during discussion on this [report in the Punjab Legislative Council, a move was made by Muslim leaders to introduce a resolution that the proportion of the Muslims in the Punjab Legislative Council, be fixed on the basis of the understanding arrived at in Lucknow Pact. An amendment was, however, moved by Gajjan Singh, a Sikh member, that "it should be subject to the just claims of the Sikhs", but this was opposed by both Hindu and Muslim members and this amendment was defeated, the Hindu Muslim block voting against it in spite of the appeal of the Chairman emphasising the injustice to the Sikhs by throwing out the amendment. The Chief Khalsa Dewan kept on pressing this demand.

The Congress League agreement at Lucknow pertained to two matters ; firstly, the recognition of separate electorate as

the basis of India's electoral system ; secondly, weightage to the minorities in the provinces. According to this agreement, the Muslim majority was reduced by 13% in Bengal and 5% in Punjab but in lieu thereof Muslims got 33% in Bombay with a population of 20%, 30% in U.P. with a population of 14%, 29% in Bihar with a population of 13%, 15% in Madras for a population of 7% and 17% in the then Central Province for a population of 7%. Sikhs got only 20% representation in Punjab for their population of 13%, while the Hindus and Sikhs jointly got 25% in the then North Western Frontier Province for a population of 10%.

These concessions to the minorities, though liberal and justifiable, were based on the recognition of the principle of separate electorates and each community was allowed to develop in its own way, electing its own representatives with a mandate from the community itself. Therefore, there can be no doubt that the Congress League agreement of 1916 was important landmark in the history of the constitutional development in the country. Whereas, one set of writers are of the view that separate electorates did ultimately lead to the growth of separate ideologies and separate entities, but the Muslim writers concur with this view point from a different angle. Khaliq-ul-Zaman one of the very prominent leaders of the Muslim League in his book "Pathway to Pakistan" writes .

"The seeds of partition of India were thus duly laid there in Lucknow when due to their inexperience, the Muslims agreed to have equality in the Punjab and a minority in Bengal and other provinces. If a straightforward course had been adopted and representation on a population basis had been agreed upon, the Muslims would have started with a majority in the Governments of Punjab and Bengal and all the questions which poisoned the relationship between the two communities in the years following 1924 would not have arisen. Whether the Hindus agreed to this self denying ordinance of the Muslims from a biter motive or from a real desire on their part to settle the differences that existed between the two communities can only be guessed. However, this led ultimately to Pakistan losing large portion of Bengal and the Punjab at partition."¹

The opinion of the author that the seeds of partition of India were laid in the Lucknow Pact is correct. It is, however, incorrect to say that the partition of Bengal and Punjab could have been avoided if Muslims had got the majority at that time. It can, nevertheless, be said that had the basis of the agreement at the time of Lucknow Pact been recognition of joint electorates as a condition precedent to the grant of weightage to the minorities in the provinces, the shape of things would have been different and the country would have developed and grown on nationalistic lines. Acceptance of separate electorates led ultimately to the recognition of 'two nations' in the country. There cannot be two opinions on the point, that the system of separate electorates accepted and implemented by the Indian National Congress was responsible for the emergence of 14 demands made by the All Party Muslim Conference held at Delhi on 31st December 1928, which were known as Jinnah's 14 points, and which were always the basis of negotiations thereafter between the Congress and the Muslim League. They were :

1. The Government of India should be Federal.
2. The residual powers to vest in the Provinces and the States.
3. Any bills opposed by the 3/4 members of any community present shall not be proceeded with.
4. Right of separate electorate of Muslims to remain in tact, till they themselves give it up.
5. One-third representation of the Muslim members in the Central Legislature
6. The retention of the present basis for the representation in the provinces where the Muslims are in minority.
7. No majority to be converted into minority or equality.
8. Reforms to be introduced in Baluchistan and in N.W.F.P.
9. Separation of Sind.
10. Reservation for the Muslims in the services.
11. Protection of Muslim culture, language, religion and

the country where both could have jointly participated and developed a reciprocal confidence in such ventures bringing in a common out-look and joint interest. This, unfortunately, Gandhiji avoided believing always in his old saying, "back to the village with all its austerity and simplicity" and this was the reason for the failure to bring unity for which he made a genuine and honest effort.

Another view in this regard which cannot be easily brushed aside is that Gandhiji had only replaced Tilak's leadership in the Nationalist Movement in the country advocating a break with the conciliatory attitude and moderate policies of the past. Tilak had certainly been a dynamic force in the country but he embodied in his thoughts and preachings the revivalism of Hinduism during the national renaissance of the period preceding independence. No doubt, the times called for a national awakening and an upsurge of national values, but it had taken a communal track under the leadership of Tilak. In order to organise and channelise the national awakening he had adopted the celebrations of the "Ganesh Festival" and the "Shivaji Festival" thus giving them a communal overtone and using this platform for anti-British and anti-foreign rule propoganda. Such measures, though easy for organising and awakening the nationalist urge among a section of the people with the objective of ridding India of foreign rule involved a revivalism in the Hindus as a community. Thus continuity was maintained by Gandhiji, who picked up what Tilak had left by organising 'Hindu Parchar', 'Harijan Sewa' and advocating cow protection and giving Hindu names to his movement like 'Ram Raj' 'Swaraj'. These slogans were misinterpreted by anti-Congress elements in the Muslims, particularly by the Muslim League. The apprehensions of the Muslims were further confirmed by the communal outlook of eminent leaders in the Congress like Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malavia, who as prominent office bearers of the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Maha Sabha were also counted and considered national leaders in the freedom movement. The movement of 'Shudhi' and 'Sanghathan' by these organisations had its reaction in the Muslims who had started 'Tabligh' and 'Tansim' as counter measures. These

movements on both sides widened the gulf between the two communities. Dr. Ambadekar correctly assessed the situation in his book 'Pakistan and Partition' that though the years 1919 to 1937 was a period of most militant movement against the British rule including the Non-cooperation Movement of 1921, the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, but it had also witnessed wide scale communal disturbances which he termed as civil war which continued unabated for years leading ultimately to the Muslim separatism led by the Muslim League.

What important and crucial role separate electorates were to play in the body-politic of India was hardly appreciated by the Congress leadership at the time. The British Rulers had the foresight to see its impact. A British Officer writing to Lady Minto on their introduction in 1909 remarked, "I must write to your excellency a line to say that a very important thing has happened to-day, a work of statesmanship that will effect India and India's history for many long years. It is nothing less than pulling back the 62 millions of people from joining the ranks of seditious opposition."² Lord Minto may have been responsible for starting the Muslim hare by giving separate electorates, but it was the National Congress that paited it, looked after it and fed it. Montague-Chelmsford Reforms were based on communal electorates due to the Lucknow Pact, but it was also provided therein, that a Royal Commission would be appointed to review the situation after 10 years. But before the appointment of such commission the Congress, without the cooperation of all other parties, appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of Moti Lal Nehru to draw out a Constitution for the future set up of the country, and the report known as the Nehru Report, again recognised the communal electorates and also granted majority to the Muslims in the Punjab Legislature. Mangal Singh, the only Sikh member in the Committee did not press for special rights for the Sikh Community in his home State Punjab and at the centre. The only genuine effort that had been made and scheme formulated on the basis of joint electorates was by C.R. Dass, the great statesman and patriot. He dared to match his strength even

against Gandhiji in the Congress. He was then the leader of the Bengal Swaraj Party and formulated a Pact then known as the Bengal Pact which provided representation to the Muslims in the Bengal Assembly on a population basis and also granted 55% of Government appointments to the Muslims. This was the first formula agreed to by the Muslims on joint electorates' principle which could have been the foundation of the creation of one Nation in the country. This Pact, however, was rejected at the annual session of the Congress at Cocanda, presumably on the ground that it conceded a larger percentage to the Muslims. Perhaps, if this Pact had been accepted by the All India Congress Committee, it might later have been the basis of an All India Pact along the same lines.

The first Round Table Conference called by the British Government was another attempt to bring the representatives of Indian opinion together to evolve a formula for the future constitution of India. This was a dismal failure. Gandhiji represented the Congress and Sikhs were represented by Ujjal Singh and Sampuran Singh. Jinnah, Mohd. Shafi, Zafur-ullahan, Fazal Haq and Nawab of Chittari represented the Muslims. Prolonged negotiations did not bring about any agreement and the Prime Minister of England, Ramsay Macdonald took it upon himself to give an award. Efforts for negotiated settlement continued in India on the joint electorate basis, but this foundered when the announcement of the Award was made by the Prime Minister of England, recognising and perpetuating the communal electorates as the basis of representation. Piary Lal is responsible for the statement in his book 'Mahatma Gandhi, Last Phase', that "an outstanding instance was in 1932, when Hindus and the Muslims had all but arrived at an agreement amongst themselves in the unity conference at Allahabad. The only important issue that remained to be settled was re-constitution of Sind as a separate Muslim majority province, and the adoption of the system of joint electorate in place of separate electorates. But just when the Muslim representatives at the Conference had agreed to joint electorate on the condition that Sind was constituted a separate province, Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, went

out of his way to concede the same demand without joint electorate. As a result the Conference failed.³¹ This version is denied by Khaliq-ul-Zaman in his book 'The Pathway to Pakistan' when he writes that the conference had not decided any issue and the discussion was still going on on the question of representation of minorities in the Central legislature, when Sir Samuel Hoare made the announcement of the Award on behalf of the Prime Minister of England. The situation that arose, however, was that the perpetuation of separate electorates, grant of 1/3rd seats to the Muslims in the Central Legislature, separation of Sind, weightage to the Muslim minority in every province and even grant of majority in Punjab provided in the Communal Award were matters that put the Congress in confusion and quandry, and they could not decide how to proceed. The Congress leadership lacked the courage of conviction, and they dared not reject the Award as they wanted power on what ever basis and cost. Even Muslim Unity Board, a creation of the Congress and comprising of eminent national stalwarts like Dr. Ansari, Asaf Ali and others accepted the Communal Award and at the same time spoke on the necessity of communal unity, presumably on the basis of Communal Award and some concessions beyond it. The situation was such, that called for statesmanship and sacrifice of the highest order which the Congress Leadership lacked at the time. Rightly did Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru in one of his letters on 11th April 1934 write to Khaliq-ul-Zaman, "Talk less of self-government and more for the unity." But the power hunger was so much in the marrow of the Congress leadership that the question of unity was always given second place to the early seizure of power.

Announcement of general elections to the Central Assembly on the basis of Communal Award soon after made the leaders active. They started preparations for the elections instead of devoting their attention to the object of unity and agreement on the electorate issue. The period of the aftermath of the Communal Award was indeed dark and depressing. The Congress was indecisive and took the middle of the road course by passing a resolution of neither acceptance nor rejection of the Award. It was no guidance to the ruffled senti-

ments prevalent at the time. Gandhiji, too expressed his wish of withdrawing from politics. The decision of neither rejection nor acceptance not only reflected the indecision of the leadership on crucial issues, but was ridiculous in the light of the stand of the Muslim members of the Congress declaring their acceptance of the Communal Award. It was only the Shiro-man Akali Dal, representative organisation of the Sikhs that rejected the Award outright and in the resolution expressed their determination to get it changed. But this could not come about when Congress did not give support to the Akali Dal. The Congress accepted the Award, when it agreed to fight elections on its basis.

There was a definite change in the Muslim attitude. The slogan of "Muslim Home Land", given in 1930 by poet Iqbal in his address to the Muslim League session at Allahabad, wherein he had pleaded that Punjab, North West Frontier Province, and Sind be "amalgamated into a single State, self-governing within the British Empire or without the British Empire", had been rejected at the time. Now it began to gain reception in the Muslim mind after the indecisive stand of the Congress. The attitude of Mohd. Ali, at one time the trusted lieutenant of Gandhiji who considered him a "visionary who is at the same time a thoroughly practical person, the most loyal hearted man in the world today. And who is also amongst top most men in the world in his intellectual greatness," was indicative of the change in the Muslims when he declared in a forcefully worded letter to the Prime Minister of England that he would fight for Muslim rights against Gandhi. Jinnah, who had been very much applauded as a nationalist leader at one time and a staunch Congressite took control of the situation. He had parted company with the Congress a long time earlier, when Gandhiji had come in control of the organisation with his programme and policies of a radical break with the past and embarkation on his non-cooperation movement. But Jinnah himself had always stood for safeguarding Muslim rights. Even in 1916 he said, "I have been a staunch Congressmen all my public life and have been no lover of sectarianism, but it appears to me that the approach of separatism some times

levelled at Musalmans is inept and wide of the mark, when I see this great communal organisation (Muslim League) rapidly growing into a powerful factor for the birth of United India. A minority must above every thing else, have a complete sense of security before its broader political sense can be invoked for cooperation and united endeavour in the nationalist task. To the Musalmans of India, that security can only come through adequate and effective safe-guards as regards their political existence as a community." Jinnah had by 1934 shifted his stand from United India to the recognition of the separate and distinct entity of the Muslims with scope and sphere to develop as such, and this naturally visualised a separate 'Homeland' as pronounced by poet Iqbal. Jinnah was an astute politician and took control of the situation taking advantage of the confusion in the Congress ranks on the issues involved. He played his cards to perfection. What clever game he played could be imagined from his move in the first session of the Central Assembly after the Communal Award. Knowing the attitude of the Congress in this regard, he moved the following amendment to the Joint Parliamentary Committee Report in the Assembly; "that this Assembly accepts the Communal Award as far as it goes until a substitute is agreed upon by the various communities concerned." This amendment was carried by the Muslim members with a support of the European Block and the Government nominees, the Congress members remained neutral. The trick, however, lay in the second amendment which was sponsored in two parts to the following effect :

(1) "As regards the scheme of the Provincial Government, this House is of the opinion that it is most unsatisfactory and disappointing inasmuch as it includes various objectionable features particularly the establishment of Second Chambers and extraordinary and special powers of the Governors, provisions relating to Police rule, secret service and intelligence departments which renders the real control and the responsibility of the Executive and Legislature ineffective, and, therefore, unless these objectionable features are removed it will not satisfy any section of Indian opinion.

(2) With respect to the scheme of the Central Government called the All India Federation, this House is clearly of the opinion that it is fundamentally bad and totally unacceptable to the people of British India, and, therefore recommends to the Government of India to advise His Majesty's Government not to proceed with any legislation based on this scheme and urges that immediate efforts should be made to consider how best to establish in British India alone a real and responsible government, and with that view take steps to review the whole position in consultation with the Indian opinion without delay."

It was a move on the political chess board of India, wherein Jinnah excelled all other players in sharpness of intellect and vision. He opposed in the amendment the very federation he had sponsored and supported as President of the Lahore Session of the Muslim League in 1924. He had included it as one of the points in his 14 points passed at the India Muslim Conference at Delhi, and had been supporting it as one of the most prominent and participating members in the Round Table Conference of 1931. But at this time his opportunity came to exploit the antipathy of the Congress members to the idea of federation with the Indian States, wherein the Congress leadership then thought, they would be vetoed out by the representatives of the Princely order, then henchmen of the British. Therefore, he was able to carry the Congress block with him in opposing the formation of a federation, while foresightedly visualising the partition of India. He was able to carry through the amendment opposing the federation by 70 votes to 58 and was also able to carry the European block with him in his resolution of acceptance of the Communal Award. This opposition of the federation was then a great blunder on the part of the Congress leadership. Knowing that elections were to be held under the Government of India Act 1935 with enlarged powers to the provinces and Ministries were to be constituted thereunder, and also some element of responsible government had been introduced in the centre, Jinnah embarked on his move to co-ordinate the intelligent and progressive elements in the Muslims. With

that object in view, he made overtures to the leading nationalist Muslims and members of the Muslim Unity Board, then a wing of the Congress, offering them majority in the Muslim League Parliamentary Board, and thus attempting to wean away the nationalist Muslims from the Congress. It was a clever trap into which the Muslim Unity Board members fell. Jawahar Lal Nehru was well aware of this, but did not take any steps to stop this. Jinnah kept his words with the Muslim Unity Board members, and the Muslim League Parliamentary Board then constituted had a majority of "Nationalist Muslims" who had taken part in the freedom struggle and who had a say in the Muslim masses. This was a land mark in the growth of the Muslim League and its hold on the Muslims increased considerably.

The first general elections of 1937 brought the Muslim League very much into prominence as a representative organisation of the Muslims. The Congress captured most of the non-Muslim seats, but failed badly on the few seats where Muslim candidates stood on the Congress ticket. It only succeeded in N.W.F.P. where Muslim candidates fought on the Red Shirt Party ticket as allies of the Congress. The Congress had put only 58 candidates out of the total 418 Muslim seats in the country. The Muslim League captured 29 seats out of 36 in U.P. whereas it was able to secure 40 seats out of 79 in Bengal, 39 going to Krishak Praja Party. The Muslim League, of course failed badly in Punjab capturing only 2 seats, but the Congress party too had no gains from the Muslim seats in Punjab which went entirely to the Unionists which was a party mainly of Muslim Zamindars which subsequently merged in the Muslim League. The Muslim League did well in the elections in the rest of the provinces where the Muslims were in minority, proving therein that it had captured the imagination of the masses, and had aroused political consciousness in them on the basis of separatist tendencies. This should have been a warning to the Congress leadership about the shape of things to come; but the Congress remained unconcerned. It had captured 135 seats out of 144 general seats in U.P. the biggest Indian province which had always played a major role in the

politics of the country. This province had been the centre of the activity of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, and had given birth to the Aligarh Muslim University, the fountain head of separatist ideology for the Muslim Youth. It was in this province that Muslim League had captured most of the Muslim seats in the legislature. Because of this strength of the Muslim League block in the U.P. Legislature, it expected some sort of arrangement with the Congress Assembly Party in the sharing of power and the formation of the Ministry in the Province. The greatest disappointment and frustration came to this party when Babu Rajinder Parshad, then President of the Indian National Congress announced that Congress party would not co-operate with any group or party. The Muslim League group was even anxious to merge in the Congress Assembly Party with the only proviso that "the Muslim League party members in the U.P. Assembly will be free to vote in accordance with their conscience on communal matters." The Muslim League leadership in U.P. was even ready to dissolve their entity in their anxiety to share power in the provincial sphere with the reservation mentioned above. This was not a demand which could not have been accepted after all the concessions that the Congress party had been conceding when it had accepted separate electorates in the Lucknow Pact and the Nehru Committee Report 1928. This refusal of the Congress leadership to share power with the Muslim League in 1937 proved to be the foundation stone on which the future edifice of Pakistan came to be built later. Mr. Ian Stephen, a noted writer, then Editor of the "Statesman" New Delhi commented, thus in his book 'Pakistan' regarding this mistake of the Congress in rejecting the overtures of Muslim League; "The Congress leadership thereupon decided that U.P. League could only join the provincial Cabinet on terms unlikely to be accepted by any self-respecting party; namely that they must themselves become members of the Congress and that Leagues' Local Parliamentary Board must be dissolved permanently."

The immediate effect of this, on many Muslim minds throughout India was of a lightning flash. What had before been but guessed at, now leapt forth in horridly clear-cut lines.

The Congress, a Hindu dominated body was bent on the eventual absorption of the Muslims. Western style majority rule in undivided subcontinent would only mean the smaller community being swallowed by a larger, as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan had long ago pointed out ; in the end the Muslims would find themselves just one of the lower Hindu castes dissolved in a general idolatrous rush. Those were the opinions when and after the Cabinet was formed. Congressmen did nothing whatsoever to sweeten things.....

Another historian of the time, Penderal Moon, in his book 'Divide and Quit' wrote : "There is no doubt that the leaders of the Congress were responsible though quite unwittingly, for this critical change in Muslim sentiments. In retrospect, it seems as though a curse was laid on them at the time which compelled them over the next ten years invariably to act in such a way as to bring about exactly the opposite result to which they intended. They passionately desired to preserve the unity of India. They consistently acted so as to make its partition certain." Commenting on this blunder of the Congress leadership in 1937, he writes, "This proved to be fatal error—the prime cause for the creation of Pakistan but in the circumstances it was very natural one. There was nothing in parliamentary traditions requiring the Congress on the morrow of victory to enter into coalition with another party; and a coalition with the League, which the Congress leaders looked upon as a purely communal organisation, was particularly distasteful to them. They may also well have thought that if in the U.P. the League could be lured into dissolving itself, it would soon disintegrate throughout the country leaving no all India Muslim Party in existence, but only isolated provincial groups. Moreover, the idea of absorption, or gathering all the Muslims into Congress fold, was typical of the Hindu habit of mind and the past history of Hinduism." According to Moon, the reaction to this refusal spread even to the Muslim majority provinces and the merger of the entire Muslim Block in the Unionist Party of the Punjab under the leadership of Sikander Hayat Khan in the Muslim League later, was due to this refusal. Sir Sikander felt that the atmosphere that had come to exist due to

the attitude of the Congress was such that the Muslim members might desert him, and he may not be able to mould the Muslim opinion of Punjab in his own way, though he himself had little sympathy for the virulent communalism displayed by the Muslim League.

Brecher, the biographer of Nehru also considered this refusal of the Congress leadership to form coalition with the Muslim league, "an Himalayan blunder" and writes thus: "The League offer of cooperation was now treated with disdain. It was not rejected outright but a series of incredible conditions were laid down by the Congress—League members of the provincial cabinet should join the Congress; the League group in the Assembly should be disbanded and its members should follow Congress orders; and the League should no longer contest bye-elections in the united provinces. It was nothing short of ultimatum for the League's self-destruction. Jinnah took the Congress demand as declaration of war and replied in kind."⁶

Maulana Azad then head of the Congress election machinery for the U.P. Zone was a most disappointed man and made bitter comments in his Autobiography published after his death wherein he wrote; "If the United Provinces' League's offer of cooperation had been accepted, the Muslim League party would for all practical purposes have merged in the Congress. Jawahar Lal's action gave the Muslim League in U.P. a new lease of life. All students of Indian politics know that it was from U.P. that League was organised. Mr. Jinnah took full advantage of the situation and started an offensive which ultimately led to Pakistan."⁷

The attitude of Jinnah before the March Resolution of the League in 1940 was that he was very much against one party government in the provinces and any arrangements of similar lines at the Centre. He gave his views thus in the concluding portion of an article that appeared in 'Time and Tide' in early February, 1940: "That there are in India two nations who must both share the governance of their common motherland." The emphasis was on two nations and not partition of the country. He was very much in favour of coalition and sharing

of power. It was for the first time in March, 1940, that during an interview with the Viceroy, he was reported to have told him that if Britain could not find a way of resolving the political problems that confronted the country, and if the Congress were not amenable to some arrangements suitable to the League, he and his friends would have no option but to demand some kind of partition of the country as he considered that the Muslims were no longer a minority but a nation.

The outbreak of the War afforded another splendid opportunity for repairing the damage that had been done. On the plea of a national emergency, the Congress could have retraced its steps and could have joined hands with the League in coalitions both in the provinces and at the Centre. If the Congress had entered into such a working partnership with the League, while moderate men were still in control of the Muslim masses both in Bengal and the Punjab, the forces of disruption could have been checked. But the Congress chose to follow the barren path of non-cooperation—non-cooperation with both the British and the League—and resigned from the offices which they held in the provinces. Discussing the Congress role during the war period and the mistakes committed by the Congress, Moon writes: "From the point of view of preserving Indian unity, this was perhaps the most foolish step Congress ever took. In fairness, it must be said that several Congress leaders consented to it with reluctance and misgivings; and Gandhi's own initial reaction was against it. If the British had shown more generosity and imagination, the scales might have been tipped the other way. But the chance was missed and Congress, blind to the importance of reaching accommodation with the Muslims, while there was yet time, and obsessed by their struggle with the British gave up office and with it the prospect of coalition with the League. Within six months Jinnah and the League committed themselves to demand for Pakistan."⁸

Gandhi's statement "That without a workable arrangements with the Muslims, civil resistance will be resistance against the Muslims" was pigeon holed and shelved and the Congress started non Cooperation with the British in the war effort

as well when Britain was involved in the Second World War against Axis Powers. It was a life and death struggle for the British and, it also meant a question of the survival of Democracy against Fascism. Hence the British Government hoped that the Indian parties would come to the help of the Commonwealth Countries. The Congress Working Committee did pass a resolution at Wardha on June 15, 1940, offering to join a National Government to help the War effort subject to the proviso that independence be conceded after the war; yet no effort was made to placate or to influence the Muslim opinion in India to take an identical stand. It is correct that Maulana Azad, then the Congress President, approached Jinnah telegraphically making enquiries if the League could agree to any provisional Government "not based on a two nation scheme". He was however, sharply rebuffed by being designated. "a Muslim show-boy made Congress President to give colour that Congress is national organisation to deceive foreign countries" and by a refusal to discuss the subject by correspondence or otherwise. There were, however, two Muslim majority provinces. Punjab and Bengal, headed by Muslim Chief Ministers, Sir Sikandar Hayat and Maulvi Fazal-ul-Haq who could be approached to join the National Government on the basis of some agreement in view of the exigencies of the time and the necessity of the British to constitute a National Government for assisting war effort. Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan had taken a strong stand on the issue at the very outset and went to the extent of making a fighting speech on 11th March, 1941, when he said:

And let us alone show to the rest of India that we in the Punjab stand united and will not brook any interference from whatever quarter it may be attempted. And then and then only we will be able to tell meddling busy bodies from out side 'hands off Punjab' "

Sir Sikandar's reference was clearly meant for Jinnah and he was in a position to take a strong stand on the war effort and would have certainly joined the National Government, had he been given support by influential quarters in the country, particularly the Congress. He had even agreed to become a

member of the National Defence Council along with Sir Mohammad Syad Uilah and Maulvi Fazal-ul-Haq, Chief Ministers of Assam and Bengal respectively. The attitude of Maulvi Fazal-ul-Haq was similar to this. He even went to the extent of resigning from Muslim League on the War effort issue and gave a rebuff to Jinnah while explaining his conduct in regard to certain charges levelled against him by the Muslim League Working Committee. He said in reply to one of the charges "that principle of democracy and economy were being subordinated to the arbitrary wishes of a single individual who sought to rule as an omnipotent authority over the destiny of 33 million Muslims in the province of Bengal, which occupies a key position in Indian Muslim politics." Here again the snub was meant for Jinnah and the stand taken was for the benefit of the War effort. Formation of a National Government, then, in the country, for which the British authorities would have given maximum support with a view to obtaining help for the War effort from India would have brought a climate of unity between the major communities in the country. The Congress might not have kept the War effort as its objective but the formation of a National Government would have given key positions and status to the Congress in such a government. What might have happened to the future of the country, if the Congress had agreed to the formation of the National Government on the basis of certain favourable conditions which were available at that time, is a question that reflects on the leadership of the day. It can, however, be said with certainty that the formation of a National Government to which co-operation was available by substantive sections of the Muslims at that time would certainly have isolated Jinnah and his Muslim League even if he had stuck to the condition which he wanted to be complied with before he participated in such a National Government. But the Congress embarked on its programme of civil disobedience despite the fact that no working arrangement had been arrived at with the Muslims at that time. Mr. C. Rajagopalachari, then a very prominent member of the Congress Working Committee, also maintained in one of his conversations to a friend when he expressed the opinion

that: "The fight through civil disobedience without Hindu Muslim unity could no longer take us near our goal." And Hindu Muslim unity could have been obtained had the National Government been allowed to be formed particularly when, on the eve of Sir Stafford Cripps' Mission to India, it had been declared by the Prime Minister of England:

"His Majesty's Government, having considered the anxieties expressed in this country and in India as to the fulfilment of promises made in regard to the future of India, has decided to lay down in precise and clear terms the steps which they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realisation of self government of India. The object is the creation of a New Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect to its domestic and external affairs."

Alongwith this preamble an announcement was made by the British Government pledging to accept and implement forthwith, after the termination of the War, the constitution framed and drawn by a Constitution-making body composed of 1/10th of the representatives from the entire membership of the lower houses of provincial legislatures elected on a proportional representation system, and representatives of the princely states appointed in the same proportion "as to their total population as in the case of the representative of British India as a whole" unless the leaders of the Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other method of electing a constituent body before the end of the War. This declaration also included the proviso that

"(i) The right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides.

With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution giving them the same full status as the Indian Union and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that therein

laid down.

(ii) The signing of a treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's government and the Constitution Making Body....."

There is, no doubt, that though the proviso in the Declaration giving the option to the provinces to secede was detrimental to a minority like the Sikhs who were concentrated in an area with a Muslim majority, yet there was no reason why the formation of a National Government at the Centre and its continuance during the War period could not have made an impact on the Muslim majority provinces not to go out of the Indian union and keep it intact and united. It was also obvious that Indian leadership was trying to reconcile the irreconcilable. It felt that the interest of India lay in the success of the British and the Allies in the war but at the same time it wanted to take advantage of the situation to press the country's claim to independence. This was obvious from the 'Quit India' resolution passed by the Congress Working Committee on 12th July, 1942, wherein it was stated:

"In making the proposal for the withdrawal of British Rule from India, the Congress has no desire whatsoever to embarrass Great Britain or the Allied Powers in the prosecution of the war or in any way to encourage aggression in India or increase pressure on China by the Japanese or any other power associated with the Axis group. Nor does the Congress intend to jeopardise the defence capacity of the Allied Powers. The Congress is, therefore, agreeable to the stationing of the *Armed forces* of the Allies in India, should they so desire, in order to ward off and resist Japanese or other aggressions, and to protect and help China."

But the fact of the matter was that the 'Quit India' resolution of the Congress was due to Gandhiji's miscalculation that the Britishers were going to be defeated and India was being invaded by the Japanese. This view is supported by what Maulana Abul Kalam Azad wrote in his book, 'India Wins Freedom' wherein he expressed his surprise that Gandhiji, contrary to his previous declaration made after his release in

1945, in a statement to the 'News Chronicle' should have stated that if India had been declared free, he would have voluntarily sided with the British and given full support to the War effort. This attitude of the Congress which was not at all constructive naturally drove the British Government into the lap of the reactionary forces. There is no doubt that the English writers do not openly say this, but this seems obvious when certain writings are read between the lines. For example, Pendraal Moon in his book 'Divide and Quit' writes thus: "It is possible, though by no means certain, that if from the outset the British had made it quite clear that they would never countenance Pakistan, the division of the country would have been avoided. But it was difficult, if not impossible, for them to do this. By the time the demand for Pakistan was actually put forward by the Muslim League, World War II had already broken out and the main Hindu political organisation, the Congress, was standing aloof in an attitude of passive hostility. In these circumstances the British could hardly have been expected to risk antagonising also the principal Muslim political party by turning down their demand out of hand. They were also precluded from doing so by the repeated assurance given earlier that the wishes and the interests of the minorities would not be lightly over-ridden."*

As already stated, the attitude of the Congress as regards the War effort made the British Government notice the Muslim League in order to get support from it. Jinnah's remarks on this subject made after the war are very significant. He said: "Suddenly there came a change in the attitude towards me. I was treated on the same basis as Mr. Gandhi. I was wonder struck why all of a sudden I was promoted and given a place side by side with Mr. Gandhi." How confused and indecisive the Congress leadership was at that time is also apparent from the views which Jawahar Lal Nehru expressed publically when the Second Great War was declared. He said in a statement at the start of the War: "In a conflict between Democracy and Freedom on the one side and Fascism and Aggression on the other, our sympathies must inevitably lie on

the side of Democracy . . . I should like India to play her full part and throw all her resources into the struggle for a new order." The fact that Jinnah preferred to sit on the fence and exploit to the advantage of the Muslim League the situation created by the non-cooperation policy pursued by the Congress as regards the War efforts, is also apparent from the wording of a resolution of the Muslim League. It empowered its President (Jinnah) to satisfy himself before deciding "to give an assurance of support and cooperation on behalf of the Mussalmans of India to the British Government for the purpose of the prosecution of War." This was another clever finesse by Jinnah on the political chessboard.

There was another significant move by the Viceroy at the time. He suggested that there should be a consultative group of the leaders of all parties ; this suggestion presumably was in view of the fact that the Muslim League and the Congress could not arrive at a working arrangement about the Government. In pursuance of this suggestion, the Viceroy proposed a meeting between Jinnah, Rajinder Parshad and Gandhiji. They met, but the Congress representatives refused to consider any proposal of working together unless the British Government pronounced its objectives in the War. This again was another reason for the British Government falling upon the support of the Muslim League.

Jinnah had his own game to play. He was taking full advantage of the attitude of the Congress i.e., non-cooperation with the War efforts. Appreciating the anxiety of the two Muslim majority provinces in regard to the War efforts, he made them exceptions and for the rest he made it a condition for Muslim participation in the War efforts : that (i) no constitution either interim or final would be adopted by the British Government without the approval and consent of the Muslim India ; and (ii) that in order to secure genuine and whole-hearted support of the Musalmans, it was imperative that within the frame work of the constitution then in force, Muslim India's leadership would be associated with, as full partners, in the Central and Provincial Governments. But with all this, he kept the reins in his own hand as authorised by

the resolution of the Working Committee passed at Bombay on June 16, 1940, requesting the Muslims particularly the members of the Muslim League not to serve in the War Committees but to await his instructions while he continued to negotiate with the Viceroy on this matter.

Maulana Azad considered that Gandhiji's approach to Jinnah in 1944 was a great political blunder. He thought that "It gave a new and added importance to Mr. Jinnah which he later exploited to the full. Gandhiji in fact adopted a peculiar attitude towards Mr. Jinnah from the very beginning. Mr. Jinnah had lost much of his political importance after he left the Congress in the twenties. It was only due to the Gandhiji's acts of omission and commission that Mr. Jinnah regained his importance in India's political life. In fact, it is doubtful if Mr. Jinnah could ever have achieved his supremacy but for Gandhiji's attitude. Large sections of Indian Musalmans were doubtful about Mr. Jinnah and his policy but when they found Gandhiji was continuously running after him and entreating him, many of them developed a new respect for Mr. Jinnah. They also thought that he was perhaps the best man for getting advantageous terms in the communal settlement."¹⁰ Maulana Azad was of the considered opinion that it was Gandhiji who gave currency to the title of "Qaid-e-Azam" (great leader) when writing to him with that designation.

The situation under such circumstances was such that there was a stalemate; the League leadership sitting on the fence and watching every move of the Congress, while the Congress leadership, instead of acting soberly and in a statesmanlike manner, knowing that no cooperation was coming forth from the Muslim leadership, drove the Britishers into the lap of the League leadership by organising a campaign of individual civil disobedience which made no impact on the population at large. This was another big blunder that the Congress committed at that time.

Another view was that the rejection of the Cripps Proposals was not for the reason that they involved the right to secede from the Indian union for the Provinces but that the rejection

was due mainly to the fact that the participation of the Congress in the National Government to be constituted for the interim period was not in accordance with the terms of the Congress Working Committee. The proposals were very dangerous from the point of view of the Sikhs as a community for the reason that according to them the Sikhs would also have gone out of the Indian Union, being residents of the Muslim majority area. Maulana Azad was of the view that the Cripps Proposals should have been accepted and their rejection "was due more to his (Gandhiji's) aversion to war than to his objection to the proposals as such." He wrote later, "in fact, his judgment of the merits of the proposals was coloured by his inherent and unchangeable aversion to anything which might involve India in war. Proposals, however, favourable to India, if they meant that India should have to participate in War, went against his grain. He also did not like the heart of the offer which said that after the war, the Congress and Muslim League would be given an opportunity to settle the communal issue."¹¹ Maulana Azad also wrote that there was confusion in the minds of the members of the Congress Working Committee in regard to the War effort. Gandhiji, according to him, was opposed in principle to any participation in war but Jawahar Lal Nehru and others were deeply troubled by the developments in Europe and Asia and were anxious, about the fate and future of democracy. His (Nehru's) natural sympathies were with them and wanted to help these democracies as far as possible. Maulana Azad adds: "He was, therefore, inclined to consider the proposals (Cripps') favourably. Indeed feelings against the British were so strong at the time that he could not state his position clearly and explicitly. I could, however, read his unspoken thoughts and sympathised generally with his views." The objection to the grant of option to the provinces to secede from the Indian Union was even met by Sir Stafford Cripps by asking Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, then the Chief Minister of Punjab to see Maulana Azad, the then President of the Congress. Maulana Azad described the interview thus: "Sir Sikander came to Delhi the next day and after meeting Cripps he saw me. He was of the view that the Cripps' offer was the

best possible solution of the communal problem. He was convinced that if the matter was put to vote of the Punjab Assembly, its decision would be on national and not on communal lines. He then conceded that if the vote was now taken his forecast was likely to be right, but as to what would happen after the end of the war was more than he or I could say. I told him that I could not accept that he would have the same influence then as he had now." This was to meet the Congress leadership's apprehension about the opting out of the two provinces but the confusion was such that Jawahar Lal Nehru while giving an interview to the representatives of the 'News Chronicle' soon after Cripps left, tried to represent that though Congress had rejected the Cripps offer, yet India was willing to help the British and he was even ready to make a broadcast from All India Radio but was dissuaded by Maulana Azad from doing so.

V.P. Menon has, also expressed identical views in his book "Transfer of Power" that it was after the Ramgarh Session of 1940 that the Congress finally announced its anti-compromise attitude in regard to the War effort that the British Government decided to isolate and ignore the Congress. He writes: "After passing of the Ramgarh Resolution—with its threat of civil disobedience—the Viceroy definitely turned his back on the Congress. With the Congress in opposition Lord Linlithgow felt that he should not alienate Muslim opinion or rub Jinnah the wrong way, there being no possibility of accommodating the divergent claims of the Congress, the Muslim League, the Depressed Classes, and the Princes, the Viceroy felt that he could now afford to adopt a policy of 'wait and see'."¹¹ Menon also made the revelation that G D. Birla did try his utmost to avert the crisis and approached the Viceroy in this regard, but the attitude of the Viceroy had definitely stiffened against the Congress. The Cripps Proposal formed one integrated whole—one long term and other short term—pertaining to the National Government and the War effort. They could be accepted or rejected as a whole. They were rejected by the Congress. The League, however, extended its conditional cooperation in the War effort, permitting the two majority States of Bengal and

Punjab to give support in War effort and for the rest allowing the individual Muslims to support the War effort and serve on the War Committees. It was limited cooperation, no doubt, but it was not non-cooperation and this made the British Government look upon the Muslim League with sympathy and support at a critical time in the history of India. Another Himalayan blunder had been committed by the Congress. These mistakes were responsible for the growth and development of separatism in the country leading ultimately to the 'Two Nation' theory, once an idea of few students, later an ideology of some, and lastly an objective of the entire Muslim people which led to the partition of the country.

The Sikhs had opposed this separatism at one stage expecting that adoption of pure and un-adulterated Nationalism by all components and the communities of India would develop a society based on political and emotional integration with equality of opportunities, which would enable merit and ability to count and carry. Had the Congress selected and stuck to this course and evolved a society, some might say, the Sikhs as such would have been absorbed in "gigantic flow of Hindu renaissance, thus losing their distinct entity." The Sikh leadership, however, believed that the Sikhs would have emerged as natural leaders of such a society by sheer strength of their character and inherent dynamism. Therefore, they resisted separatism persistently for a long time. The Congress, however, accepted and adopted separate electorates and all that goes with it, possibly on Muslim persuasion, may be as part of Hindu revivalism—entitling the Muslims to grow and develop in their own way. The Sikhs could not permit their absorption. They chose the only course open to them in the circumstances, with a view to preserving their culture and religion. They soon found that political power was essential for this objective. Hence commenced their constant struggle, which continues to-day.

References and Notes

1. 'Pathway to Pakistan' by Chaudhry Khaliquai-Zuman, page 37.
2. Lady Minto's Memoirs.

3. "Mahatma Gandhi, Last Phase" by Piare Lal, page 78.
4. "Pakistan" by Ian Stephen, page 76.
5. "Divide and Quit" by Pendra Moon, page 60.
6. "Nehru : A Political Biography" by Michael Brecher, page 213.
7. "India Wins Freedom" by Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, page 161.
8. "Divide and Quit" by Pendra Moon, page 273.
9. "Divide and Quit" by Pendra Moon, page 283.
10. "India Wins Freedom" by Maulana A.K. Azad, page 93.
11. "India Wins Freedom" by Maulana A.K. Azad, page 50.
12. "Transfer of Power in India" by V.P. Menon, page 84.

THE SIKHS AND THE TRANSFERENCE OF POWER

III

How much the Sikh leadership was somnolent at that time is apparent from the fact that when the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms were in the offing, and a transfer of some power to the Indian hands seemed imminent in the second decade of this century, the Sikh representatives in the Imperial Legislative Council, S.B. Sunder Singh Majithia refused to sign the memorial dealing with the post war Reforms drawn by 19 additional members and submitted to the Viceroy. Jinnah was one of the signatories to that memorial. The fact that the Sikhs were not playing active part in the power politics became apparent, when their existence as a separate community was not recognised in the Lucknow Pact of 1916, the result of the Congress-League concord. There seemed to have been no mass awakening as such among the Sikhs nor were they recognised as a minority with a separate entity. Perhaps they were considered a part and parcel of Hindu community. The Lucknow Pact was certainly a compromise between the Congress and the Muslim League and it would have been more politic for the Congress to have recognised the separate entity of the Sikhs as such to counter the League's claim of majority in Punjab; yet this was not done despite the fact that the existence of separate communities was recognised in the Lucknow Pact in the following terms: "That great communities of India are

the inheritors of ancient civilisation and have shown a great capacity for Government and Administration," and further stated, "that the Muslims should be represented by a separate electorate in the provincial legislative council in the following proportion: Punjab 1/2 of the elected Indian members....." And weightage was given to them to each province. It was further stated that, "the franchise of the Imperial Legislative Council should be widened as far as possible on the lines of the electorate of the Muslims for the provincial Legislative Council; and elected members of the provincial Legislative Council should also give electorate for the return of members for the Imperial Legislative Council," and "1/3rd of the Indian elected members should be Muslims, elected by a separate Muslim electorate of the 7 provinces in the proportion, as nearly as may be, in which they are represented in the Provincial Legislative Council by a separate Muslim electorate." Nowhere was there any mention of the Sikhs as a minority or otherwise.

It was only after and as a consequence of the Gurdwara Reform Movement and the formation of the Shiromani Akali Dal as a political party that the Sikhs came to be counted and constituted a distinct community to be considered and consulted. The Sikhs thereafter were in the vanguard of the non-cooperation movement in 1919 and of other freedom movements, and for this reason they began to play an important role in the body politic of the country. No doubt, they had one representative on the Nehru Committee in 1928 but he did not press the claim of the Sikhs even in their home state, Punjab, and no effort was made either to safeguard the position of the Sikh minority in that Report. The Muslims were conceded majority in the Punjab Legislature on the basis of communal electorates in the Nehru Report. The recommendation of the Report caused resentment amongst the Sikhs against its discriminatory nature and this resentment was voiced by the Chief Khalsa Dewan in a memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission. The position was made clear thus in the operative part of the representation:

"The Sikhs maintain the position that there should be no

communal representation in the legislative body of the country and in such circumstances the Sikhs claim no safeguard for themselves. At the same time they are opposed to the moves whereby certain communities want to obtain the majority..... The Sikhs feel that if the communal electorate is going to be maintained in the legislature for the Hindus and the Sikhs, then they are justified to claim a separate province for themselves but they cannot give a practical shape to this demand. Therefore, they insist that the Punjab legislature should have such a shape that no community should have majority here because of the peculiar conditions prevalent and the three communities living here. The Sikhs can rightly claim 30% of the representation for themselves and 30% for the Hindus and 40% for the Muslims. This demand is justified and this increased representation to the Sikhs is justified for the reason that the Muslim minority with the same population percentage have been given the same percentage in other provinces in India."

This representation would reflect the perceptible feelings of the intelligentsia of the Sikhs that the only safeguard the Sikhs would have in view of the emphasis on the communal electorates was a 'Homeland' for themselves, but practical shape could not be given to this idea on account of the spread of their population. Therefore, the alternative was a balance between the three communities in Punjab where they were concentrated. The Nehru Committee Report conceding Muslim majority in Punjab was rejected by the Sikhs and this was the reason why Baba Kharak Singh, the then undisputed leader of the Sikhs refused to participate in the Indian National Congress Session held at Lahore in 1929. He was, however, persuaded to join the session on behalf of the Akali Dal on an assurance given by Moti Lal Nehru, Gandhiji and Dr. Ansari who met him in the office of the S.G.P.C. that in future no constitution would be framed without the consent of the Sikhs. The Sikh representatives at the Round Table Conference again laid stress on the maintenance of balance in the Punjab Legislature, but the Communal Award again rejected this and the Muslims were given absolute majority. This again was a great blow and they

felt that the Congress had let them down by not rejecting the Communal Award in toto and instead accepting it implicitly by its resolution of neither rejection nor acceptance, and fighting election on its basis. The Communal Award of 1932, announced by the Prime Minister of England after The Second Round Table Conference had worsened the position of the Sikhs in Punjab by accepting Muslim majority therein. Another provision of this Award pertained to the Scheduled Castes which were separated from the Hindus being granted representation separately. This provoked Gandhiji to go on fast unto death in order to undo this cleavage between the two parts of the Hindu Community. He was successful in persuading the Scheduled Castes to agree to the joint electorates. Whereas his protest was so loud and vehement in regard to this injustice against the Hindu Community in the Communal Award, the Sikhs noted with grief that he did not protest against injustice done to them.

Another aspect that was looked upon with anguish by the Sikhs was the increasing anxiety of the Congress and their leaders, particularly Gandhiji, to placate the Muslims at the cost of the nationalistic principle and also at the cost of the Sikhs. Akali participation in the freedom struggle for nearly 20 years, shoulder to shoulder with the Congress and many times as a part of it, was not even recognised nor were the Sikhs or their leaders consulted in regard to the talks with the Muslim leadership. The participation of the Sikhs in the freedom struggle had been both intensive and extensive and in many instances not limited to participation in the non-violent movements like the Non-cooperation of 1919 and the Civil Disobedience of 1930. Their contribution in these movements—the Non-cooperation of 1919, the Simon Commission Boycott of 1928, the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930, was much more than their numerical strength and they went further by resorting to violence to drive out the British Rulers. The Babbar Akali Movement in the early thirties of this century was one of those Movements. It was certainly an off shoot—rather a continuity of the Ghadar Movement, started on the foreign soil and brought to the central Punjab by a few hardened and

experienced revolutionaries, all of them Sikhs, fired with extreme patriotism, who enthused the peasantry of Punjab in support of the struggle to rid India of the foreign rule. A score of Sikh revolutionaries were shot dead in encounters with the police and many were rearrested, tried and hanged. The Babbar Akali Movement was entirely limited to the pick in the Sikh peasantry. It was a warning to the foreign rulers demonstrating to them the will of the ruled to free themselves. Bhagat Singh was also the product of Babbar Akali Movement. He was the great revolutionary, who had shot and killed Saunders for insulting and assaulting Lala Lajpat Rai at the time of the visit of Sir John Simon, and had thrown a bomb in the Assembly Chamber at Delhi to awaken the dormant world opinion against Foreign Rule in India.

The Communal Award was a great shock to the Sikh leadership. It awakened them to and acquainted them with the danger posed to their entity and existence by the perpetuation of communal dominance of one community over another which was provided by the Communal Award. They noted with extreme pain the indecisive and vacillating policy of the Congress leadership in this connection. Nevertheless, the Shiromani Akali Dal agreed to fight the 1937 General Election in collaboration with the Congress which, had by then accepted the entity of the Sikhs and recognised the Shiromani Akali Dal as their representative organisation by granting a Congress-cum-Akali ticket to the nominees of the Shiromani Akali Dal. The Shiromani Akali Dal was able to capture and return a majority of seats in the legislature to its nominees who sat with the Congress on their benches in the legislature. One of the Akali representative became the leader of the opposition in the Punjab Assembly. This cooperation was extended in the expectation that the Congress leadership would take measures to redress the grievances of the Sikhs. They were, however, soon disillusioned. The decision of the Shiromani Akali Dal to help the war effort was the first step that created a gulf between the Akali Dal and the Congress leadership. This decision was the result of prolonged thinking and it was felt that non-participation in

the War effort would decrease the percentage of the Sikhs in the army which would not only be detrimental to the Sikh interest but also to the National interests. This step came to be appreciated at the time of partition in 1947. The natural consequence of cooperation in the War effort was the pact, then known as the Sikander-Baldev Singh Pact under which Akali representative, Baldev Singh joined the Punjab Cabinet on certain terms and conditions. The Muslim members of the Unionist Party were also members of All India Muslim League and subscribed to its ideology on the All-India level, but the cooperation of the Akali Dal was only limited to the Punjab sphere and to the War effort. This was borne out by the letter which Sir Khizar Hayat Khan wrote in reply when he was pressed to name his ministry as a Muslim League Ministry. He then wrote: "It is to the credit of my non-Muslim colleague that they have agreed to cooperate with the Muslim League as the only Muslim party in the Punjab and to cooperate with it in the running of the Government in this province for the duration of the War. The proposed agreement could have secured the wishes of the Muslim League and the greatest merit could have been to maintain complete unity within the Muslim community which has been most significant feature of the political life of Punjab. The Unionist Party during its existence passed agrarian legislation which helped the backward Muslim community in the Punjab to compare favourably with any other in India. The fact that I have found it impossible to accept Mr. Jinnah's demand does not mean that our ultimate objective viz., the cultural protection and economic betterment of the Muslim masses is different. The All India Muslim League resolution of 1940 is the sheet anchor of the Muslims of the Punjab as else where. The Muslims of the Punjab must have the right of self determination."

The Sikander-Baldev Singh Pact and the cooperation of the Akali Party with Unionist party (Muslim League) in 1942 was another factor that widened the gulf between the Congress and the Sikhs and evoked a storm of protest in Hindu circles throughout the country without an appreciation of the limited

scope of the cooperation. The Hindu press lashed out against the Sikhs and raised a whirl-wind of agitation in a most abusive manner. This attitude of a sister community in the Punjab piqued the Akali leaders, particularly *Giani Kartar Singh* and *Giani Sher Singh*, who had been in the forefront of the Akali Movement, and set them to rethinking about their attitude. It was a surprise to them that the Hindus and the Hindu press should not have criticised in a manner the Hindu Sabha leadership which in indential circumstances had given cooperation to the Muslim League Ministries functioning under the Muslim League name in Bengal and Sind in those days, and should have unnecessarily, made the Sikhs the target of their antipathy and venom.

This was the beginning of the independent role of the Akali Dal in the politics of the country. Assessing the trend in the Muslim thinking from the pronouncements of the Muslim leaders in the press and the platform, and the attitude of the Congress in this matter, it seemed inevitable to the Sikhs that communal dominance of Muslims in Punjab had come to stay whatever might be the shape of the future Constitution of India. The Akali leadership, therefore, evolved another formula known as 'Azad Punjab'. This formula flowed from certain observations made by the Muslim leaders. Jinnah had said, sometime before the Pakistan Resolution in 1940 that he would be ready to agree to the separation of the areas, predominantly Muslim. This is borne out from what Khaliqul-Zuman the then president of the U.P. Muslim League wrote in his book, 'Pathway to Pakistan': "After the arrest of the Congress leader, Raja Maheshwar Dyal Seth of Kotra, at the time Secretary of Hindu Maha Sabha, came to see me in the last week of October, 1942, and during the talks told me that he had met Nawabzada Liaqat Ali Khan at Delhi and had discussed the possibility of a coalition between the Hindu Maha Sabha and the Muslim League at the Centre and in the provinces. He informed me that the Nawabzada was agreeable to exclude the Ambala division from the Pakistan Area and there was only the question of the Jullundur division left for settlement between Hindu Maha Sabha and the Muslim League in terms of

the Lahore resolution. He said if I could also agree to exclude the Jullundur division from the North Pakistan area, a settlement between the Hindus and the Muslims could be arrived at without much difficulty."¹

This version relates to October 1942, thirteen months after the Lahore resolution when Muslim opinion had been strongly swayed towards the formation of Pakistan. Jinnah's statement pertaining to the self-determination of the Muslims of predominantly Muslim areas, was in 1939, which had given the cue to the Akali leaders to have an Azad Punjab Scheme by demanding redemarcation of the boundaries of the then Punjab. The 'Azad Punjab Scheme' only provided redemarcation of the Punjab boundaries on a more rational basis in order to separate the predominant Muslim area and merge it with North West Frontier Province which had a 90% Muslim Population. This proposal was based on the fact that the Hindus and the Sikhs in the then Punjab were only 43% and as such Punjab was a Muslim majority area. But the six Northern districts comprising of Gujarat, Shahpur, Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Attock and Mianwali in Rawalpindi division were predominantly Muslim with a population of 3362250 Muslims as against 335600 Hindus and 186710 Sikhs. The break up of the Rawalpindi Division was as under according to 1931 census :

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Hindus</i>	<i>Sikhs</i>	<i>Muslims</i>
Gujarat	72,346	58,188	7,86,750
Shahpur	83,970	40,374	6,79,546
Jhelum	36,068	22,030	4,82,097
Rawalpindi	59,485	41,365	5,24,955
Attock	31,937	19,522	5,31,793
Mianwali	49,794	4,231	3,57,109

Similarly four other Northern districts of Multan division i.e., Jhang, Multan, Muzafargarh, Deraghazikhan and the Bloch Transfrontier Territory of Punjab had a population of 25,80,435 Muslims as against 3,59,993 Hindus and 58,982 Sikhs with the following break up :—

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Hindus</i>	<i>Sikhs</i>	<i>Muslims</i>
Jhang	1,02,924	8,476	5,52,853
Multan	1,77,102	39,453	9,42,937

Muzzafargarh	22,577	5,287	5,73,265
Deragbazikhan	57,217	5,766	4,92,911
Bloch Trans- frontier Territory	173	—	29,469

The exclusion of the above 10 districts which were predominantly Muslim would have, according to the Shiromani Akali Dal, left districts of Lyallpur, Sheikhpura, Gujranwala, Sialkot with a Muslim population ranging there between 60 to 70% ; districts of Montgomery, Ferozepore, Lahore, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, and Jullundur with a Muslim population ranging from 40 to 59% and the rest of the districts of East Punjab with a Muslim population ranging from 20 to 32% in the proposed Azad Punjab. The idea underlying the proposal was not new one in the sense that it was not put forward for the first time. It was only a proposal for the solution of the problem. It had been put forward during the First Round Table Conference in the memorandum by the Sikh representatives present there wherein it had been stated that if the Muslim insist on a reserve majority on the basis of separate electorates, then territorial re-arrangement of the province of Punjab was called for by separating the overwhelmingly Muslim areas. These areas were more akin to the North West Frontier Province area and should rationally be joined to that province leaving an area of the rest of the Punjab with a population of sixteen million in which no single community would have absolute majority, and there would thereby be a balance between the three communities. At that time, a counter-proposal for the reorganisation of the Punjab boundaries was put forward by Sir Geoffrey Corbett, aiming at the separation of the Ambala division from the Punjab, making it more Muslim in character. This was, however, rejected by the Sikhs and the Hindus. The Sikh representatives had argued in the Round Table Conference that they did not see any reason why the Sikhs should not be given the same weightage which the Muslims had been given in Bihar and Orrisa. In those provinces, they (Muslims) formed 11% and 14% of the population but enjoyed 25% and 30% representation in the provincial legislatures which meant weightage of merely

130% to 110% respectively. But no agreement could be arrived at. Hence the Round Table Conference failed. The objective of the Sikh move to have an 'Azad Punjab', as it began to be called then, was certainly to safeguard the Hindus and the Sikhs from the possible eventuality of the British Government conceiving and creating a Pakistan for the Muslims. This was a very far sighted and imaginative solution suggested by the Sikh leadership to save as much territory from being taken into Pakistan as possible. It was also in consonance with the statement which Jinnah had himself made before the passing of the Pakistan resolution in 1940 at the Lahore Session. The solution suggested was not immediately rejected by the Muslim leadership at that time. They waited to see its reaction on the Hindu mind. There was every possibility of its being accepted even by the Muslim League and the Muslims, by and large, for the reason that they would have felt that a basis was being laid down for the creation of Pakistan. Moreover, they would get a separate, predominantly Muslim majority area which could easily be separated if ever the Britishers withdrew and granted independence to the country. While the Muslims and the Muslim League were silently watching the reaction of the Hindus and the Sikhs to the suggested move, the Congress leadership in the Punjab and the Hindu leadership in the country rose to protest and vociferously agitated against this move; joining with them the Sikhs of those areas proposed to be outside the ambit of Azad Punjab. This was indeed tragic.

"Azad Punjab Murdabad", "Master Tara Singh Murdabad" were the slogans and shouts of a motley crowd of Hindus with a sprinkling of the Sikhs strutting the streets of Cambelpur, a border town in the North of Punjab, which I heard when I went there on 10th May, 1942, to meet Master Tara Singh, then the President of S.G.P.C. and also of the Shiromani Akali Dal. I was then the President of the Shiromani Khalsa Dewan, a representative organisation of the Sikhs living in the tiny province of N.W.F.P. known as the 'Land of the Pathans' now a part of Pakistan. I had received a telegram from Master Tara Singh nominating three members of our organisation to

the managing committee of Gurdwara Shri Panja Sahib at Hasanabdal, then as now and as ever a very sacred and reputed place of Sikh worship and pilgrimage because of the visit Guru Nanak Dev Ji paid there and because of the mark of his palm imprinted on a rock near a spring which had its own history. The telegram also conveyed a proposal that I should accept the Presidentship of this committee. I had held a hurried conference and had consultation with the members of the Shiromani Khalsa Dewan, who asked me to accept the offer, and it was in these circumstances that I was on a visit to that place when I heard these slogans and shouts in protest to the visit of Master Tara Singh and Jathedar Mohan Singh later President of the S.G.P.C. who were on a tour in support of the Azad Punjab Movement. How one wished that the Hindu leadership, both in the Congress and outside, had appreciated the farsightedness and vision of the Azad Punjab Scheme, which could and would have been accepted by the Muslim leadership, had it had Hindu support. This perhaps would have saved terrible slaughter of the minorities in 1947 and their sufferings.

The independent line adopted by the Sikhs and their representative organisation, the Shiromani Akali Dal in relation to the political moves like the Sikander-Baldev Singh Pact led to extensive criticism of these policies by the Hindus and the Congress leaders which is aptly reflected in the writings of Dr. Pattabhi Sitarammaya in his book 'History of the Congress' where he writes :

"The Sikhs forming about 6½ million population of India, but inhabiting a continuous tract of country and moved by inspiring traditions of freedom and chivalry, have however, while cherishing them all, fallen victims to concepts and aspirations not wholly in harmony with the large Nationalism of Hindustan. Foreign Rule necessarily directs vision and attention from a search for power which it would not part with, to seeking out of influence which may be much or little, which may extend from Municipal and Local to provincial posts and all India positions. Is it a Sikh High Court Judge? They have only to express it, and a Sikh is made High Court

judge. Has the ministry of the Punjab no Sikh on its personnel? Lo and behold, the Sikander-Baldev Singh Pact and the appointment of the latter by the former as a provincial Minister follows. Why has there not been a Sikh in the Viceroy's Executive Council so long? Hardly had the demand been made when Sir Jogendra Singh became member of Education, Land and Revenue. The small reforms are always the enemy of the large reforms. All these sops to the cerebrus divert the mind from the legitimate sphere of National striving. Where is Sardar Ranjit Singh of old and where are the miniature Sardars who hold on to toy places in which they sit as dolls pulled to action by strings held by a Viceroy here or Governors of provinces there. Is it any wonder then that the Congress has had to face a stupendous task in having to engage the affection of the Sikhs, and other groups and has to witness their aloofness and even opposition on an occasion like that visualised by the Bombay Resolution. The position is made more delicate by the fact that the Sikhs are a professional martial race and are as keen on safeguarding their numbers and influence in the Army and on the battle field as in public offices. The Sikhs however have not, like the League, stood in the way of a solution of the all Indian problem and the formation of a National Government. Only they want their quota in the Military and the Civil Services commensurate with their importance. They express themselves in term of nationalism and are prepared to repudiate all communalism so long as the latter stand by it, the former claim their pound of flesh and a few drops of blood as well.¹² All that should be said here in this regard is that the learned Doctor exhibits a colossal ignorance and unawareness of the treatment accorded to the Sikhs by the Congress and its impact on their minds. No doubt, the Sikander-Baldev Singh Pact raised a tremendous storm in the Hindu press in Punjab and among certain sections of the Hindus in rest of the country, but the issues involved were of such a vital importance, and the Congress attitude also, demanded independent and distinct role of the Sikh leadership.

The conditions of the North West Frontier Province had

taken a different turn. The Burma road, the only life line for transmission and transport of men and material in aid of China by the South East Asia Command was practically closed due to the intensive bombardment by the Japanese who had taken control of the entire coast line of South East Asia, and were marching towards Assam and Bengal. Chittagong and other important towns of Bengal were the victims of bombardment. Under such circumstances and conditions, an alternative route to China was being looked for and that it was thought that it could be through Ladakh to Sinkiang, the Western part of China. Chinese engineers made frequent visits to the North West Frontier Province in search of the route. The N.W.F.P. was the base of the Allied troops also, and it was in such circumstances that the members of the Assembly then thought of having another popular Ministry when the Congress Ministry had resigned in 1939. The 'Quit India' movement had not been much of a success in the N.W.F.P. where the arrests were not many and even Dr. Khan Sahib, the leader of the Congress Assembly Party was outside jail. The Muslim Nationalist Party which had constituted a ministry in 1937 with the co-operation of Mehar Chand Khanna, then the Deputy leader of Hindu Sikh Nationalist Party, had named itself the Muslim League Party in 1940. And it was the same party that decided in early 1943 after having secured majority to form a popular Ministry. The Hindu Sikh Nationalist Party had dwindled due to the desertion of that who had defected to the Congress like Rai Bahadur Chaman Lal who had accepted the Chief Parliamentaryship in the Congress Ministry, and Rai Sahib Bhai Parmanand who also had gone over, and because of the death of some members. I was the Secretary of the Hindu Sikh Nationalist Party then, and Mehar Chand Khanna became the leader. Mehar Chand Khanna had gone to United States of America on a lecture mission on behalf of the Government of India to explain their stand in regard to the War Effort. It was in such conditions that I was approached by the League leadership in the province to form a coalition Government. By that time, Ministries had been formed in Sind and Bengal with the support of the Hindu Maha Sabha. Vir

of any bargaining with Dr. Khan Sahib. All that I wanted him to assure me was that the Sikhs through Sikh member of his party should be given a chance in the ministry, if and when formed. I wanted to put Congress to test about its bonafides about Sikh rights. He expressed his inability to give that assurance and the matter ended there. It is again incorrect that the coalition did not have majority. It had majority and it was for that reason that no confidence motion could not be brought against it for nearly 22 months till Dr Khan Sahib was able to wean away some Muslim members of Hazara from the ministerial party. The popular support was obvious from the fact that the Muslim League had successfully bagged all the four Muslim seats in the bye-elections; and the Akali candidate lost Peshawar seat by 80 votes only for the reason that about 1,000 Hindus got their names recorded as Sikhs in the electoral rolls as the Rules provided that any person could give declaration that he was a Sikh and get his name entered in the electoral roll. Dr. Pattabhi Sitarammaya exhibited colossal ignorance when he recorded that no bye-election was held of the Muslim seats. It was ludicrous to have quoted the resolution "by the executive of all India Sikh Youth Association at its meeting held at its office as an instance to stablish censure" on my conduct for my entry in the coalition Ministry, when he should have known that the All India Sikh Students' Federation of that time, a most representative organisation of the Sikh youth, passed a resolution supporting the coalition Ministry. The historian of the Congress could not have been unaware of the fact that Shiromani Akali Dal had also passed the resolution declaring that it could not oppose the coalition Ministry in the circumstances. I had all along felt that I carried the support of Master Tara Singh for it was in his presence that Giani Dhanwant Singh, the then General Secretary of Shiromani Akali Dal had given me Vir Sarvarkar's telegram requesting me to settle the terms of the coalition with the League leader-hip. Master Tara Singh did succumb to the storm raised by the Punjab Hindu press, and gave a press statement denying his consent to my entry in the coalition Ministry but at the same time announcing his faith in

my 'bonafide'. However, when I met him on the 28th of May, 1943, and protested against this incorrect statement, he readily agreed to have a resolution passed by the Shiromani Akali Dal's Working Committee, declaring that it was not opposed to the coalition Ministry. The Shiromani Akali Dal subsequently gave its ticket to Sardar Balwant Singh in the bye-election, and Giani Kartar Singh and scores of the Akali Workers including Sardar Hukam Singh a lawyer at Montgomery, came to Peshawar in his support. Balwant Singh was my nominee. Another version given was that it was not a coalition Ministry but a Muslim League Ministry. It was a coalition Ministry, it was announced as such and it functioned as such. This was abundantly obvious from the reply which the Secretary of State gave in the Parliament in reply to certain questions tabled by Mr. Dobbie (Labour) when he enquired about the nature of Ministries in the different provinces and the interests and parties they represented. The Secretary of State's reply was that "all the ministries in six provinces, wherein normal constitution is functioning are based on coalitions of parties and interests. Five of them are headed by ministers who joined the League last autumn. I am not aware that any other Muslim Ministers have only recently joined the League. I have no information that a vote of confidence has been withheld from any of the ministries. The recently formed Ministry in the N.W.F.P. has yet to meet the legislature."

It is relevant to mention here that the coalition Ministry stood by the Pact despite all pressures that were brought on Aurangzeb Khan. He was condemned for having agreed in writing to shelve the question of Pakistan during the existence of the coalition and during the war. And it was his this stand that led subsequently to his being deprived of the Muslim ticket at the wishes of Jinnah conveyed through Qazi Isa, the League Balochi leader, despite the unanimous demand that he could alone lead the Muslim League party to victory in 1946 General Elections. The result was that the Muslim League was not able to capture more than 17 out of 36 Muslim seats in N.W.F.P. Dr. Pattabhi Sitarammaya could not mention any

instance in the entire chapter XXVIII of his book of any discriminatory legislation against either minority, Hindus or Sikhs in N.W.F.P. whereas there are illustrations given by him about Bengal, Punjab and Sind, the three other Muslim majority provinces.

The narration of the above events in their sequence is indicative of one fact, that the Congress attitude towards the Shromani Akali Dal and, for the matter of that to the Sikhs as a whole had been such that it led to a reaction in the Sikh minds, and drove them to independent thinking and independent political action to chalk out a future for themselves. There is no doubt that there were Sikhs who were playing the role of camp-followers as there are many playing it now, but there was certainly a genuine effort on the part of the Sikhs to pursue an independent live. It is very unfortunate that the learned Doctor should have been so critical of the Sikh attitude then while making the following observations:

“Why of all people the Akalis showed a change of attitude towards Ministry formation, emphasising offices and so effecting a climb down from the higher pedestal of nationalism to the lower planes of communalism, is a mystery that passes all understanding. Had they not a name to conjure with, a reputation to lose? Who would forget the brave deeds associated with their names and achievements, the sufferings they had endured at Guru Ka Bagh, the price they had paid in the Nankana Tragedy, the arduous struggle they had faced before they built their organisation on their broken bones and lacerated flesh? Who could forget the sense of fellowship with the Hindus and the Muslims which the Akalis had all along exhibited in the National Struggle from the days of the Khilafat Movement in 1921 through the dark times of the Simon boycott, and the bursting of the upheaval of the Salt Satyagrah (1930-31)? Was not Master Tara Singh a prisoner along with his 3000 fellow sufferers in 1930, that year and then a member of the National Flag Committee appointed at Karachi Congress?” He further writes: “Had not the Sikhs maintained all along that they opposed communal representation but that if the Muslims had it they too should have it, and in this view

had they not opposed Ramsay Macdonald's Communal decision, wrongly known as Communal Award, tooth and nail with no duplicity such as was introduced (though wrongly) to the phraseology of the Congress which neither supported nor opposed the 'Award'? Had a decade of persistence by the British converted, as indeed hoped for by them, even the Akalis to the cult of communalism, that they should count their gains on communal basis? How would even four high-placed jobs advance the interests of the Sikh community as nationalism pure and undefiled would, or as Mukammil Azad could? The Akalis had all along plumped for full freedom and in that view and with that object, joined the Congress in their thousands, controlled the Provincial Congress Committee, fought the elections shoulder to shoulder with Congress candidates in the General Elections of 1937, on the basis of "Congress Akali Ticket" for their reserved seats."⁴

All that one can say in reply, "Healer, Heal Thyself". The learned Doctor could have hardly forgotten the tremendous sacrifices and sufferings undergone by the Sikhs during the movements he narrated in his book besides the Ghadhar Movement, spearheaded and sponsored by the Sikhs in Canada and United States of America to raise the revolt against foreign rule in India from foreign soil, the Kamagata Maru incident in 1914 when scores of Sikhs travelling by a chartered ship of their own had been harassed and hounded back by the Canadian authorities and returned back to India to rouse the people; the Babbar Akali Movement in Punjab during twenties of the century, entirely led by the Sikhs which shook the British prestige to its very roots, but which was disowned and denounced by the Congress leadership driving scores of revolutionaries to desperation and thus to gallows and long imprisonments. Therefore, it should have been more in the fitness of things for him to analyse and probe, why this change came about in the attitude of the leadership of the affected minority. Had the author of the "History of the Congress" considered the step-motherly treatment accorded to the Sikhs at the time of Nehru Report in 1928, despite which they went whole heartedly with the Congress in Civil Resistance Movement of 1930? Was he not

aware of the neutral attitude of the Congress and thereby the implied acceptance of the Communal Award which terribly affected the Sikh minority in 1932 as he conceded, despite which they fought shoulder to shoulder with the Congress as its allies in the General Elections of 1937 on Congress Akali Tickets? Could he be unaware of the acceptance by the Congress of those clauses in the Cabinet Delegation's Proposals which allowed an option to the North zone to remain out of the All India Union, thus, throwing the Sikhs bound hand and foot, to the mercy of the Muslim predominant majority, despite which the Akali Dal stood by the Congress at a very critical and crucial stage of Indian history, when it gave all the moral support to the Congress against the League in 1946-47. The events preceding the partition drove the Sikhs into a whirlpool of such an extreme intensity and force, produced by the cross currents and tides of conflicting and clashing ideologies, that they found themselves at one stage in such straits that safety seemed difficult and it seemed that they were fast moving towards extinction. They, however, survived and the events that followed led to the forced exchange of population giving them a heaven and a 'Home land'.

References and Notes

1. "Pathway to Pakistan" by Khaliqul Zuman, page 226
2. "History of the Congress" by Dr. Pattabhi Sitarammaya, page 467
3. "History of the Congress" by Dr. Pattabhi Sitarammaya, page 529.
4. "History of the Congress" by Dr. Pattabhi Sitarammaya, page 520

THE PARTITION AND THE SIKHS

IV

The advent of the Muslims had, no doubt, introduced a new factor in the Indian polity, but this could have been harmonised and adjusted in the evolution of an Indian Nation, had not Hindu revivalism become a part of the National struggle, which came to be responsible for "separatism." Could it have been avoided? This is an issue for the historian to probe. 'Divide et impera' is a Roman saying which the rulers have always and everywhere followed in their own interest, consciously or unconsciously. It is inherent in a ruler. The history of the Congress may be said to be—as some claim—the history of the national struggle for freedom in the country, but at the same time these moves brought forth the channels on which Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs embarked separately. The Congress organisation seemed to attempt at the outset to take all the communities into its embrace. It was for this reason that though in the first session of the Congress there were only two Muslims, the number was made to increase to 33 in the second session, leading to 156 Muslim participants in a delegation of 702 in 1890. This naturally created an anxiety among the Rulers and they made efforts to wean the Muslims away from the Congress fold. The move might have been initiated by the British Government itself, when warning had been given to them by the extensive agitation

of the Hindus against the partition of Bengal and attempts to enlarge its ambit, as part of Hindu revivalism, by making such an agitation an all India movement, not only to get the partition of Bengal undone, but also to integrate and unify the country under the majority rule. The seed of separatism sown by the British Rulers by conceding the separate entity of the Muslims in the future constitutional set up of the country was manured and watered by the All India Congress Committee itself by its recognition of communal channels in its Lucknow Pact of 1916 which gave its seal of approval to what the Rulers had done. Whether it was power hunger in the Congress leadership or desire for Hindu dominance that inspired and motivated this recognition, is another matter. But the fact remains that the communal electorates' demand was conceded as a permanent feature of the constitutional set up of the country for all times to come. Therefore, the national forces in the country cannot blame the British Rulers alone for it. The two communities drifting apart soon led to communal riots in different parts of the country. The drift culminating in the 'Communal Award' on the basis of which the Government of India Act 1935 was enacted which further perpetuated the separate growth of the major communities of India almost as separate nations. The success of the Muslim League changed its face to a mass organisation, from a feudal clique to a representative organisation of the Muslims. At the same time, the bungling of the Congress, taking a mistaken view of its importance from the few successes on the general (non-Muslim) seats, drew it to the formation of one-party Government, forcing the Muslims to a consideration of ways and means to safeguard their position.

The atmosphere and time was such that several proposals were put forward to find the unity of India in a diversity that was widening. As far back as 1933 "A Punjabi" who did not disclose his identity then, but was said to have been Sir Mohammad Shah Nawaz Khan, published a book named 'Confederacy of India' wherein he proposed the division of India in five regions, (i) Indus Region (ii) Hindu India (iii) Rajasthan (iv) Deccan States and (v) Bengal. In this scheme,

there was to be a common link between the different units. This, no doubt, was to be a loose sort of Central Confederation having control of foreign affairs and defence. Similarly Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, the Unionist Party Leader (and Chief Minister of Punjab), a party comprising of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, had published a pamphlet in 1938 under the title of "Outlines of Scheme of Indian Federation" in which he proposed the division of India into seven zones connected together by a loose confederation. This scheme proposed a vesting of residuary powers in the confederating States, with a loose sort of control by the Central machinery over defence and foreign affairs, and that too, with the consent of the federating units with the right to secede at the option of the units. But Sind Provincial Muslim League Conference, which was held at Karachi on 7th October, 1938, made the following demands in regard to future set up of India. It resolved:

1. That in the interest of the economic and social betterment and political self-determination of the two nations known as Hindus and Muslims, the Muslim League should review and revise the entire question of what should be the suitable constitution of India and devise a scheme of constitution under which Muslim may attain full independence.
2. That the scheme of all India Federation be dropped.
3. That no constitution be acceptable to Muslim India which does not conform to the foregoing principles."

The Congress, however, never bothered to think about the shape of things to come. The Lucknow Resolution of 1938 was the warning which was not heeded. This was followed by the March Resolution of 1940 adopted at Lahore now described as the 'Pakistan Resolution'. There is no doubt that the March Resolution of the Muslim League had a terrible impact on the public in general. It unequivocally demanded the partition of the country and for that matter a separate state for the Muslims to rule. Yet it was not named or designated a Pakistan Resolution. It was the Hindu press in fact, which named it 'the Pakistan Resolution' and gave it an importance that enamoured it to the Muslim mind. Had the Hindu

press not given it so much importance and not hammered it into the minds of the Muslim masses by starting a continuous propaganda against it in abusive and filthy language, things *might have been different*. It was in this spirit that Sir Sikander Hayat Khan in his speech in the Punjab Legislative Assembly on the 11th March, 1941, said, "My Honourable friends can call it Pakistan or whatever name they like. They dubbed it Pakistan and it is now popularly known as Pakistan. The ignorant masses have now adopted a slogan provided by the short sighted bigotry of the Hindu and Sikh press. If I may venture a word of protest and advice I consider it a rotten mistake on the part of the Hindus and Sikhs to raise this here. They probably wanted to create an atmosphere amongst the Hindu and Sikh masses against the resolution. That was their objective and I think they have succeeded to some extent, but they overlooked the fact that the word 'Pakistan' might have an appeal—a strong appeal for the Muslim masses. It is a catching phrase and it has sparked the popular imagination and has thus made confusion worst confounded.....The result is that the political adventurers have been provided with vast opportunities of exploiting the ignorant each according to own inclinations and convenience....." He expressed his own opinion thus in the same speech: "We do not ask for freedom that there may be Muslim Raj here and Hindu Raj elsewhere. If that is what Pakistan means I will have nothing to do with it.....I have said before and I repeat it again here on the floor of this house. If you want real freedom for the Punjab i.e. a Punjab in which every community will have its due share in the economic and administrative fields as partners in a common concern, then that Punjab will not be Pakistan, but just Punjab, land of the five rivers; Punjab is Punjab and will always remain Punjab whatever anybody may say. This then, briefly is the political future which I visualise for my province and for my country under new constitution."

The Congress leaders were, however, busy in their struggle to evict the Rulers without taking a stand against the partition which appeared to be in the *offing*. The Sikhs did call an All Parties' Sikh Conference in which the Cripps proposals were

rejected on the ground that the provinces were being given the option to remain out of the India Union, hence the conference declared, "that they would resist by all possible means the separation of the Punjab from All India Union." This was indicative of the commitment of the Sikh leadership to the All India Federation and reflects the patriotic approach of the community as such. The Congress, however, had implicitly accepted the clause pertaining to right of the provinces to remain outside the Union if they so desired. Dr. Pattabhi Sitarammaya in his book, "The History of the Congress" concedes this stand of the Congress when he writes :

"There was little doubt that Cripps was trying to be clever. It was clear that the Working Committee rejected the proposals successively on three occasions, the first on 2nd April, but Cripps wanted it not to be published in the press. It was then that he sent a formula on defence which was again rejected on the 7th, but this time it was asked by Colonel Johnson not to be published. Then came Colonel Johnson with another formula on defence and this after undergoing several modifications was finally rejected on the 10th April. From these dates it is clear that defence and cabinet responsibilities were the rocks on which Cripps Scheme split."¹

Again while commenting on the role of one Dr. Abdul Latif of Hyderabad who was working on the scheme of Pakistan, Dr. Sitarammaya writes :

"Letters passed between him and the President of the Congress in which the latter reiterated the position that whatever was stated by the Congress Working Committee in Delhi recognising the rights of territorial units to self-determination, remained intact and was not disturbed or discounted by the Allahabad Resolution opposing Pakistan, moved by Jagat Narain Lal."²

This was in or about August, 1942. It shows that the Congress leadership had accepted the principle of granting option to the provinces to remain out of India, and had conceded the basic objective of the Muslim League Resolution.

All this was done despite the stand taken by the All

Parties Convention of Sikhs in unequivocal and clear terms that they would 'resist by all possible means the separation of Punjab from All India Union.' It seems surprising that after this stand of the Congress leadership in 1942 at the time of the Cripps Mission, the Congress could take a different stand in 1946 at the time of the Cabinet Delegation. Yet the Sikh leadership in 1946 could not visualise the future when it should have been already known to them that Pakistan had already been conceded in 1942 even earlier than the Rajagopalachari Formula. As stated earlier, the Congress leadership was more keen to wrest power from the British hands than to lay emphasis on the unity of India. The Sikhs till then had never demanded a separate home land or any particular place for themselves. Dr. Sitarammaya was, therefore, uncharitable in making the following observations: "The Sikhs opposed it tooth and nail because the community would be distributed over two unions and they claimed the right to form an autonomous unit themselves." From where has he gathered this is inconceivable, unless he thinks that the Sikhs' demand emanated from the desire to counter the Pakistan Resolution by asserting that in such circumstances they would also be entitled to a separate home land. This, however, was impossible because Sikhs were nowhere in majority and there was no question of transfer or exchange of population and as such there could be no conceivable demand of a separate autonomous unit for the Sikhs at that time. Despite this, their attitude has been taken in a different light by the author of the 'History of the Congress'. That Pakistan was in the making is also obvious from the Rajagopalachari Formula later known as 'Rajaji's Formula' which was presented to Jinnah in April, 1944. The formula incorporated the following terms:

"1. Subject to the terms set out below as regards the constitution of Free India, the Muslim League endorses the Indian demand for the independence and will cooperate with the Congress in the formation of the Provisional Interim Government for the transitional period.

2. After the termination of the War, a Commission shall

be appointed for demarcating contiguous districts in the North West and East of India wherein the Muslim population is in an absolute majority. In the areas thus demarcated the plebiscite of all the inhabitants, held on the basis of adult franchise or other practicable franchise, shall ultimately decide in favour of forming a sovereign state separate from Hindustan, such a decision shall be given effect to, without prejudice to the right of districts on the border to join either State.

3. It will be open to all parties to advocate their point of view before the plebiscite is held.

4. In the event of separation, mutual agreements shall be entered into in respect of defence, commerce and communications and for other essential purposes.

5. Any transfer of population shall only be on an absolutely voluntary basis.

6. These terms shall be binding only in case of transfer by British of full power and responsibility for the Government of India."

The wording of the proposal clearly shows that there was no provision for the safeguards for the Sikhs. This was again unfair to the Sikhs. But the Cripps proposals had been dropped and the individual civil disobedience had been embarked on by the Congress. It did not have much of impact on the people. The Working Committee of the Congress were put in jails and the Britishers channelised the co-operative forces in the country to the objective of organising maximum war effort. Then a cabinet delegation came again in 1946 to find a solution. By that time, the Indian leaders had been freed. The Cabinet Delegation interviewed all the leaders of Indian public opinion. Master Tara Singh was one of the those whose interview was fixed [for 5th April, 1946. The Sikh leadership was most indecisive as to how to proceed. They could not decide any particular line of action. They had already given cooperation to the Unionist Ministry. Baldev Singh was playing a major role. There was one Major Short who had once been liaison officer with the Indian Army. He was acting this time as liaison between the delegation and the

Sikhs. There were several meetings going on day after day to prepare the case of the Sikhs and put it before the Cabinet Delegation. A board, then known as the Panthic Pritinidhi Board had been constituted comprising of nine people from all over India to chalk out a programme of action. I, had also been invited from the N.W.F.P. and nominated as a member of the board. This board held many conferences. I was struck by the confusion prevalent in the ranks of the Sikh leadership. Big Sardars and landlords from Delhi would come, and thrust their advice on Master Tara Singh only to claim safeguards for the Sikh minority. Sardar Patel was in command of the situation for the Congress, controlling and channelising the minorities to toe the Congress line. The Sikhs were being asked to do the same thing. It was with great difficulty that Master Tara Singh was made to agree to see Jinnah. This meeting was arranged at New Delhi at the house of Sir Malik Teja Singh a retired Minister of the Patiala State. Maharaja Yodevandra Singh of Patiala and Sardar Hardit Sir Malik, the then Prime Minister of the Patiala State were also present at this meeting. There was a vocal section of the young Sikhs of the All India Sikh Student Federation led by Messers Sarup Singh and Amar Singh Ambalvi who wanted Master Tara Singh to play an independent role. It was a sad state of affairs, that he did not at first agree to meet Jinnah. Ultimately, however, Master Tara Singh met Jinnah. The Congress agents in the Sikh ranks were successful and Master Tara Singh was accompanied by Harnam Singh, later Advocate General and a Judge of the Punjab High Court. The interview was brief. Jinnah was reported to have said that he recognised the Sikhs to be a sub-national group and would concede all that was reasonable provided the demands were put in a specific form. He further stated that the Sikhs must put in writing the position and place they wanted to have in the future constitutional set up of Pakistan. Master Tara Singh said that the offer should come from Jinnah for the Sikhs to consider and then alone the Sikhs would decide whether or not to give support to the League's demand for Pakistan. The interview ended with an exchange of views on the above

lines without arriving at any conclusion. There was no possibility of any settlement, as Jinnah and the Muslim leadership had not appreciated the Sikh position correctly. Efforts had been made by the Sikh leadership particularly Giani Kartar Singh, then considered the brain trust of the Sikhs, to evoke a response from Muslim League circles about the Sikh position in the constitutional set up of their thinking but such all efforts failed. The attitude of Sikhs towards the Muslims was not very much averse in those days and nor was the gap so great or grave that it could not be bridged. Giani Kartar Singh had even gone to the extent of having attended the meeting of the Muslim League members from all over India at Delhi, to win over the goodwill of the Muslim League, yet this also failed to bring home to the Muslim leadership the importance of the Sikhs in the India body-politic. Ian Stephens, the then Editor of the 'Statesman' and a keen observer of Indian political scene, describes the situation in the following words in his book 'Pakistan'.

"For what it may be worth, this writer's view however is that if, in the winter of 1946-47, the League Leadership let an opportunity slip, it was not, by that time, one of much substance; that no firm Muslim-Sikh rapprochement was feasible. Admittedly, this is based more on instinct than reason; on a flesh-and-blood remembrance of what were the public's swaying moods. But other observers who were on the sub-continent might agree. Certainly Pakistan would have been a very different State, had the Sikhs been embodied within her. But they have since proved, on occasions, quite troublesome for Mr. Nehru's India; might they have been even more so for Pakistan, the smaller and brittle country?"

To speculate on the possible course of events, had the League leaders paid more attention to the Sikh problem while it was still fluid, and perhaps made some magnanimous gesture during those crucial winter weeks of 1946-7 before calamity came to the Punjab is nevertheless a legitimate historical exercise. Our knowledge, now of what happened so soon after, throws into lurid relief how big were the issues at stake."²

Ian Stephens is right when he considers the situation very fluid at that time and the Sikhs indecisive about

their future. Had a magnanimous offer come from Muslim League giving security to the Sikhs in their future set up, it would have been considered by the Sikhs. It was, however, not in the winter months of 1946-47 as by that time the Sikhs had thrown their lot with the Congress, but it could have been in the month of April and May 1946, when the Cabinet Delegation was in India and British plan of the 3rd June, 1946, was yet to come. The failure of Master Tara Singh's talks with Jinnah on the fateful day of 2nd April, 1946, strengthened the hands of the Congress agents in Sikh circles, and Master Tara Singh was prevailed upon to visit Sardar Patel at his residence on 3rd April, 1946. What transpired between Sardar Patel and Master Tara Singh was only known to Master Tara Singh and he kept it to himself. Here again Harnam Singh accompanied Master Tara Singh. It might be that the disillusionment of those days motivated Master Tara Singh to demand Punjabi Suba in the post partition India, but it is a fact that only thing he was prevailed upon to lay emphasis in his interview with the Cabinet Delegation on the 5th of April was that Sikhs would prefer an independent Sikh State if India was divided *without giving the location or possibility of this*; but otherwise the Sikhs stood for united India and for some sort of coalition Government of all communities. But what he said must have been diluted by the stand taken by his companion, Harnam Singh when he later advocated only increased representation to the Sikhs in the Constituent Assembly.

Jinnah interviewed the Cabinet Delegation on 5th April and this is how Menon describes the way in which Jinnah exploited the rift between Hindus and Muslims and put his case :

"The differences in India were far greater than those between European countries and were of a vital and fundamental character. Even Ireland provided no parallel. The Muslims had a different concept of life than the Hindus. They admired different qualities in their heroes ; they had a different culture based on Arabic and Persian instead of Sanskrit origins. Their social customs were entirely different. Hindu society and philosophy were the most exclusive in the world. Muslims and Hindus had been living side by side in India for a thousand

years, but if one went into any Indian city one would see separate Hindu and Muslim quarters. It was not possible to make a nation unless there were essential united factors."⁴

And this is how Menon describes the interview of the Sikh leaders with the Cabinet Mission. The information of Menon is based on verbatim reports, that must have been recorded at that time and what he writes is, therefore, authentic. He describes the interviews thus :

"The case of the Sikh community was presented by Master Tara Singh, Giani Kartar Singh and Harnam Singh as well as by Baldev Singh. The first three were interviewed together, though each had his own individual views to put forward. The Mission wished particularly to know whether, if it were given the choice, the Sikh community would prefer the transfer of power to single body or to more than one body ; if powers were to be transferred to two bodies which of them would the Sikh community wish to join and if such thing were practicable and could be arranged, would the Sikhs wish to have a separate autonomous State of their own?

"Master Tara Singh said that he stood for a united India and for some sort of coalition Government of all communities. The Hindus and Muslims were not united and would remain antagonistic for some time. In that situation the Sikhs in a united India would have a degree of bargaining power. If India were divided the Sikhs would come under the majority of one community or the other ; in that case they would prefer a separate independent Sikh State with the right to federate either with Hindustan or Pakistan.

"Giani Kartar Singh said that the Sikhs would feel unsafe in either of the united India or in Pakistan. They should have a province of their own where they would be in a dominant, or almost dominant position. In reply to Sir Stafford Cripps, who asked what would be the area of the proposed Sikh State, Giani Kartar Singh suggested that it should be the whole of the Jullundur and Lahore divisions together with Hissar, Karnal, Ambala and Simla districts of the Ambala division and the Montgomery and Lyallpur districts.

"Harnam Singh was opposed to the partition of India. Such

a step he said, would be against the wishes of the Sikh community. A divided India would be a prey to foreign invasions and there could be no safeguard except in an independent Sikh State. He advocated an increased representation of Sikhs in the proposed constitution making body and pleaded for a separate one for the Sikhs if there were to be more than one constitution making body.

"Baldev Singh, who was a Minister in the Punjab Government at the time, was interviewed separately. He gave a brief description of the manner in which the position of the Sikh community had deteriorated since 1914 and how impossible it would be for it to exist unless it were given special protection. Sir Stafford Cripps asked specifically how 'Khalistan' could be formed, to which Baldev Singh replied that it would be the Punjab, excluding the Multan and Rawalpindi divisions with an approximate boundary along the Chenab river. An area comprising the Ambala division, the Jullundur division and the Lahore division was the smallest that could be contemplated. But the Sikhs, strongly favoured a united India; they considered the division of India unwise because the small states on the frontier would be at the mercy of great powers and so would be a source of danger to India. In Baldev Singh's view the best solution was a united India, with safeguards for minorities in the form of weighted communal proportions in the legislatures. Questioned as to the nature of the safeguards which he would regard as adequate, Baldev Singh said that in some of the British India provinces, e.g. Bombay, weightage was given to Muslims as against the Hindus. If, in the Punjab legislature, the Muslims were contended to have forty-five percent of the seats instead of 51%, and the balance were to be divided between the Hindus and the Sikhs, then Sikh interest could be protected"

The ultimate result of the Cabinet delegation was a Cabinet Mission Plan of 16th May, 1946. The plan was a compromise between the Pakistan Resolution of the Muslim League of 1940 and the All India Union that Congress visualised for the future of the country. The plan provided three sectors or a group structure or a loosely confederated India which could

not have prevented the formation of Pakistan if the majority Muslim group had decided to withdraw from the Union. And the Sikhs would have gone with it in Pakistan without any security or position in the future set up. The position of the Sikhs in such constitutional set up was described by Master Tara Singh in his protest letter to the Secretary of State for India on 25th May, 1946, when he wrote :

"Since the British Cabinet Mission's recommendations for the future constitution of India have been published, a wave of dejection, resentment and indignation has run throughout the Sikh community. The reasons are quite obvious.

"The Sikhs have been entirely thrown at the mercy of the Muslims. Group B comprises the Punjab, the N.W.F.P., Sind and Baluchistan and the representation given to each community will be Muslims 23, Hindus 9 and Sikhs 4. Can any body expect from this assembly constituted as it is, any consideration or justice for the Sikhs? The Cabinet Mission recognises the very genuine and acute anxiety among the Sikhs lest they should find themselves subjected to a perpetual Muslim majority rule. If the British Government are not aware of the Sikh feelings, the Sikhs will have to resort to some measures in order to convince everybody concerned of the Sikh anxiety, in case they are subjected to a perpetual Muslim domination. The Cabinet Mission has not only put under Muslim domination the Non-Muslim areas of the Punjab and Bengal but the whole province of Assam where the Non-Muslims are in overwhelming majority. This is evidently done to please the Muslims. If the first consideration of the Cabinet Mission's recommendation is to give protection to the Muslims, why should the same consideration not be shown to the Sikhs? But it appears that the Sikhs have been studiously debarred from having any effective influence in the province, a group of general union. I refer to section 15 (ii) and section 19 (vii) in which it has been definitely provided that the majority of both the Hindus and Muslims is necessary for certain purposes. The Sikhs are entirely ignored, though they are as much concerned as the other communities.

"This is how I read the recommendations of the Cabinet

Mission. But as the issues are very grave and momentous the Sikh representatives, assembled here to-day to consider the situation created, have advised me to seek clarification from you and find out if there is any hope of such amendments as may save the Sikhs from perpetual domination. So I put three questions:

"(1) What is the significance of recognising the Sikhs as one of the main communities ?

(2) Suppose the majority of Section B frames a constitution under section 19 (v) but the Sikh members do not agree, does this create a deadlock or does the opposition of the Sikh members mean simply disassociation ?

(3) *Is there any hope of obtaining for the Sikhs the same rights as are given to the Muslims and the Hindus under section 15 (ii) and 19 (vii)?*"

The reply that came on the 11th June, 1946 was :

"The anxieties of the Sikhs were kept prominently in mind when we were drafting the Cabinet Mission's statement and I can certainly claim that of the various alternatives open to us, the best one from the Sikh point of view was chosen. You will, I am sure admit that, if India had been divided into two sovereign States or if the Punjab had been partitioned, either of these decisions would have been far less acceptable to the Sikh than the one which was actually reached.

"I have considered carefully the detailed points you raised at the end of your letter, I fear the Mission cannot issue any addition to or interpretation of the statement. There is, however, no intention whatever to prejudice the position of the Sikhs in the Punjab or in the North West Group, nor do I think their position has been prejudiced, for it is inconceivable that either the Constituent Assembly or any future Government of the Punjab will overlook the special place in the province of Sikhs. The estimate of the importance of your community would never depend on the number of seats that you hold in the Constituent Assembly. The Viceroy has told me that he will be glad, in view of the anxieties, you have expressed on behalf of your community, to discuss the position of the Sikhs specially with the leaders of the main parties when the Consti-

tuent Assembly has been formed. He hopes he may be able to persuade them, if persuasion is needed, that the interests of the Sikhs should on no count be overlooked.

"If you and Sardar Baldev Singh would care to see the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy in the first week of June we shall be glad to see you."

It seems surprising that the Secretary of State should have assured that the Viceroy would be in a position to persuade the two major parties particularly the Muslims to a scheme where the interests of the Sikhs would not be overlooked. How this could be done was not understandable. The 16th May Scheme was being accepted by both the major parties wherein the groups of provinces or the provinces in Group B could opt out and remain a separate unit and frame their own constitutions. In such a group, the position of the Sikhs would have been 4 against 23 and what protection could be given and what safeguards chalked out, is a matter beyond comprehension. None of the parties, neither the Congress nor the Muslim League attached the least importance to the Sikhs to evolve out some scheme to their satisfaction in regard to their safeguards. The Sikhs rejected the plan outright. The Congress accepted it at the very outset. The Muslim League also accepted it by their resolution of 6th June, 1946, suspiciously and with misgivings, probably because it found it a half-way house to Pakistan or a step leading them to Pakistan. But as fortune would have it, Nehru declared on the 7 July, 1946, at the All India Congress Committee meeting at Bombay, "it is not a question of our accepting any plan, long or short. It is only a question of our agreeing to go into the Constituent Assembly. That is all and nothing more than that. We will remain in that Assembly as long as we think it is good for India and we will come out when we think it is injuring our cause and then offer our battle. We are not bound by a single thing except that we have decided for the moment to go into the Constituent Assembly." Three days later at a press conference he repeated again that the Congress would enter the Constituent Assembly "completely unfettered by all agreements and free to meet all situations as they arise." At that time Nehru was the Presi-

pent of the Congress, having taken over from Maulana Azad some time earlier. Maulana Azad, in his book published posthumously called this statement of Pt. Nehru "One of those unfortunate events which changed the course of history." From the Sikh point of view, it was a fortunate event, for it led to the League's rejection of the 16 May plan, and their determination to maintaining their rejection. The tragic aspect of the episode was that the Congress accepted the 16th May Plan without the slightest consideration of the future of the Sikhs or consultation with those who had all along been their allies in the freedom struggle, in the parliamentary activities and even at the time of the formation of the Khizar Hayat Khan Ministry in the Punjab after the elections in 1946. Nehru's statement was just timely though efforts were made by the Congress to modify its stand. Maulana Azad considered Nehru's declaration wrong. With pain he writes in his book : "It was not correct to say that the Congress was free to modify as it pleased. We had in fact agreed that the Central Government would be federal. There would be the compulsory list of three Central subjects while all other subjects remain in the provincial sphere. We had further agreed that there would be three sections, viz. A, B and C in which the provinces would be grouped. These matters could not be changed unilaterally by the Congress without the consent of the other parties."⁴ "But the dice had been thrown and this had exasperated the League which rejected the 16th May Plan on the 27th July, laying down their unswerving determination to have the partition of the country at any cost." It went to the extent of declaring for direct action and fixed 16th August for the purpose, and also decided to call upon all the Muslims to renounce their titles etc. The Congress tried as I stated earlier, to retrace its steps and passed a resolution on the 10th August, 1946, explaining that its previous resolution had actually been meant to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan in its entirety. This was with a view to placating Jinnah and make him retrace from his rejection resolution of 27 July, but he would not do so. He said in his statement then, "if the Congress could change so many times, while the British were

still in the country and power had not come to its hands, what assurance could minorities have that once the British left. Congress would have no change and go back to the position taken up in Jawahar Lal's statement." How true and prophetic in regard to the fate of the promises made to the Sikhs by the Congress !

I recollect those days with pain and sorrow. I recollect that the Panthic Board meeting was held to consider the steps the Sikhs should take when the Viceroy invited Nehru to form the Interim Government. The Sikhs had already rejected the 16th May Plan and this invitation of Nehru had been given after the resolution of 10th August, 1946, wherein the Congress had retracted the stand taken by Nehru by his statement of 7 July 1946. I emphasised at the Panthic Board meeting that the Sikh representatives should join the Interim Government only after an understanding with the Congress as to what their position would be in the future set up and what safeguards are contemplated to be assured to them. This was taken as an opposition to the entry of the Sikhs in the Interim Government. The Sikhs could not join the Interim Government without accepting the 16th May Plan. An earlier resolution of the Panthic Prtinidhi Board postulated unanimous decision on every matter before its implementation. My opposition therefore, was not palatable to the Sikh leadership. Hence, I was asked if I could go to Peshawar to enquire from Sardar Abdul Rab Khan Nishtar, then a close friend of mine and a member of the Muslim League Working Committee to find out how far the Muslim League would stick to its rejection of the 16th May Plan. I readily agreed, hardly appreciating at that time that this was only a move to get rid of me in order to enable a unanimous resolution in favour of the Sikh entry in the Interim Government without any condition or assurance from the Congress about the future of the Sikhs. Baldev Singh was Minister in the Unionist Ministry in Punjab and was an aspirant to a cabinet seat in the Interim Government. Swaran Singh had just entered politics having been elected to the Punjab Assembly in 1946 General Elections and was aspiring to Ministership in Punjab if Baldev Singh was elevated

to a Ministry in the interim Government. These forces were acting in favour of the Sikh entry into the interim Government and led to the adoption of a resolution, enabling Baldev Singh to enter the interim Government and to an acceptance of 16th May Plan. Another significant feature was that Niranjan Singh Gill, one of the prominent officers in the Indian National Army had been selected by Master Tara Singh as Chairman of the Panthic Pratinidhi Board on the suggestion of 'General' Mohan Singh who had come in the Punjab politics with all the glory and glamour that the trial of the I.N.A. Officers had given him at that time. He had suggested the name of Niranjan Singh Gill but few knew at that time that Niranjan Singh Gill was later to be rewarded with an ambassadorial assignment as price of the weight that he threw as Chairman of the Panthik Pratinidhi Board in favour of the Sikh entry in the interim Government, without any condition or assurance about the future of the Sikhs. Menon is responsible for the statement that it was because of Nehru that the Panthik Pratinidhi Board had accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan of 16th May in its resolution of 14th August, 1946, and he writes :

"Nehru was not satisfied. He reminded the Viceroy that in the case of the Sikhs he had called for a definite resolution for their acceptance of the statement of 16 May and that a previous vague resolution on the subject passed by the Sikh Panthik Board had not been considered sufficient. He wanted to know quite clearly what the Muslim League's view was on the subject."

This avertment of Menon pertains to the time when Nehru wanted the League to accept the 16th May Plan before entering the interim Government. This indicates the acceptance of the 16th May Plan. There is no doubt that the Sikhs had rejected the Plan when Niranjan Singh Gill, a nominee of General Mohan Singh and one of the I.N.A. Officers was there. It seems that he had been won over by Nehru and Sardar Patel and other interested forces were made to work, and consequently the Sikh stand changed.

Jinnah, however, rejected every offer of entry into the Interim Government despite retracting resolution by the

Congress. In a statement denouncing the Congress he said that, "Caste Hindus control the Congress and their few individual henchmen of other communities who want to be installed in power to rule over the Muslims with the aid of the British Government."

The direct action of August 16, 1946, was a declaration of war by the League. What happened at Calcutta had been unheard of in the history of the communal rioting, when the casualties were nearly 50,000 and about a lakh of people were rendered homeless. It was all done with the connivance of the League Government. The exclusion of the League, though applauded at the time by non-Muslim elements, was a tremendous mistake, for it gave an opportunity to the Muslim League to have a wider contact with the masses. This had a dangerous impact on the Muslims. Noakhali was the start of the killing of the Hindus compelling Mahatma Gandhi to go there to bring in some order and unity. The killing in Noakhali had repercussions in Bihar soon after, resulting in wholesale massacre of the Muslims at the hands of marauding Hindu crowds which went from village to village. The League leadership was watching the situation, having shown its strength to the world and proved its thesis that the two communities could not live together, it accepted the standing offer of entry into the interim Government in the middle of October, 1946. There was haggling about portfolios, which ultimately ended in the Muslim League nominee accepting the finance out of the major portfolios. The intention of the League entry into the cabinet was made abundantly clear in the pronouncement of the prominent members of the League, yet the Congress did not object to the entry of the League on such conditions. Ghaznafar Ali Khan, one of the League nominees, said at that time: "We are going into the interim Government to get a foothold to fight for our cherished goal of Pakistan," and added, "The interim Government is one of the fronts of the direct action campaign." It was not a bluff nor did the League nominees mince matters, but they implemented their determination by putting all kinds of hurdles in the way of the smooth working of the interim Government. Despite all efforts by the

Viceroy, there could be no smooth sailing in the working of the administration. Every effort was made to find a common solution to the problem concerning the three major communities, but without any decision. Nehru as a representative of the Congress and also Baldev Singh on behalf of the Sikhs, and Jinnah representing the League, were invited to England for talks but without any effect. Baldev Singh accompanied Nehru *in his plane and also returned with him in the same plane*. The younger section amongst Sikhs in those days were keen that the Sikhs should play an independent role in modulating their destiny in future Indian politics. They, therefore, felt strongly about Baldev Singh following Pt. Nehru like a camp-follower. Baldev Singh's statement in England, that the Sikhs had thrown in their lot with the Congress, was another incident that was keenly felt by this section, particularly, when even such a magnanimous and patriotic attitude on the part of the Sikh representative, did not evoke any echo or response of constitutional assistance to the Sikhs.

The crux of the situation on the eve of the partition was that the Congress leadership, despite all its professions and pronouncements, could not evolve an understanding about the future of the Sikhs in the event of the partition of the country. The Rajaji Formula, the Gandhi-Jinnah talks and all the conferences and deliberations visualised a partition of some kind and the only effort that was being made was to have a loose sort of Centre dealing with Foreign Affairs, Communications and Defence, to which Jinnah would not agree. He insisted that the country must be partitioned and that a treaty be then arrived at between the two parts as to whether they should have a common administration or not. There was no talk about inviting the third party, i.e. the Sikhs, to all these deliberations and conferences. The author of "Nehru, a Political Biography" Brecher also confirms this attitude of the Congress in regard to the Sikhs when he writes, "When the All India Congress Committee assembled early in January 1947, its decision on the grouping scheme could be delayed no longer. Following Gandhiji's advice, conveyed to Nehru in Bengal, it adopted an ambivalent resolution of acceptance of

British Cabinet Plan alongwith a carte blanche to the effected parties, the Sikhs, Assam and the Frontier Province to act as they saw fit."*

Whereas the Congress leadership was either unable to find a solution or was not in a mood to do so, the attitude of the Muslim League and its leadership was even worse. The attitude of the Muslim League leadership could be assessed from what Jinnah said on March 22, 1946, in an interview with the representatives of the Associated Press of India at Lahore: "To-day I have met the President and the Secretary of All India Sikh Students Federation and had a discussion with them. I made it clear to them that the Sikhs as a Nation are entitled to a State of their own. I am not opposed to it as such provided they show me where it can be created. I assured the Sikhs that I am ready and willing to do all I can to bring about a settlement between the Sikhs and the Muslims." Jinnah should have known that the Sikhs could hardly be expected to show where such a State could be, when they were not in a majority anywhere. It was for him to have clarified how the Sikhs could be assured their future by constitutional guarantees, otherwise in the set-up contemplated. Sarup Singh, the youth leader, was the President of the All India Sikh Students Federation. According to him, who met Jinnah more than once Jinnah had suggested no feasible solution, but emphasised his distrust of the Congress Hindu Leadership from which he said, he "shrank" because it "stank of communalism". His stand was similar at the time when Master Tara Singh met him on 2nd April, 1946. The Sikhs themselves too were in a state of confusion about the position which they could claim as a major community and a third party. This is obvious from the text of the Resolution adopted by a very representative gathering of prominent Sikh leaders under the Presidentship of Master Tara Singh in February, 1946. The text of the resolution was:

"The Panth notes that at the present moment, on the eve of the expected far-reaching change in the constitution of the country, the desire on the part of the majorities to dominate the minorities is rising with great tempo as is evidenced by the

slogans of Akhand Hindustan and Pakistan.

"It further notes that in a situation so greatly charged with aggressive communalism, the minorities, and specially, the Sikhs find themselves placed in a position in which they cannot safeguard their national existence against the high-handedness of a politically organised communal majority, which conviction is further strengthened by the experience of the working of the provincial autonomy for 9 years, resulting in grave attacks being made on the cultural, civil and political rights of the Sikhs in the Punjab.

"After giving mature and thoughtful consideration to the foregoing, the Panth is strongly of the opinion that no safeguards and guarantees of the communal constitutional nature, no weightage or protection promised to the Sikhs by any of the majority community can be considered adequate to protect the Sikhs and assure their free and unhindered growth as a nationality with distinct religious, ideological, cultural and political character.

"In order to ensure the free and unfettered growth of the Sikh Panth, the Panth demands the splitting up of the existing province of the Punjab, with its unnatural boundaries, so as to constitute a separate autonomous Sikh State in these areas of the Central, Northern, Eastern and South Eastern Punjab in which the overwhelming part of the Sikh population is concentrated and which, because of the property in it being mostly that of Sikhs and its general character being distinctly Sikh, is also the de facto Sikh Home Land. The area, extent, the status and constitutional frame-work of such a State being left to be settled by negotiations between the accredited representatives of the Sikh Panth and other interested parties, such as the British Government, the Hindus and the Muslims. It is further resolved that the above demand is unconditional, the absolute and minimum demand and the political objective of the Sikh Panth as a whole.

"The Panth visualises that this proposed State will be democratic in constitution and will have a socialistic economic structure, with full protection of the culture and rights of the minorities."

This resolution reflected the inner feelings of the Sikh community in the climate prevalent in the country at that time. Such feelings had already been expressed by the Muslims in the March Resolution of 1940 at its Lahore Session of the Muslim League. The Congress from that time on up to Gandhi-Jinnah talks, had come to concede the substance of that demand to the Muslims. But, for all this time, it had considered the Sikhs to be a minority and treated it as such.

All efforts to rejuvenate and revive the 16th May Plan as clarified and supplemented by the 16th June statement of the Cabinet Delegation, had failed. The visit of the three leaders, Nehru, Jinnah and Baldev Singh to England, had borne no fruit. There was no denying the fact that the 16th May Plan would have been the death knell to the future of the Sikhs in the country. It was a great mistake to have accepted the 16th May Plan. Baldev Singh's role in December 1946 on his visit to England as a camp-follower of Nehru, was deplorable. All that he said was that the future of the Sikhs lay with the Congress and that they could look after themselves and all that they wanted from the British was to quit, transferring power to the Congress. Different stories were current at that time about the alleged rapprochement of Jinnah and Baldev Singh. It is said that he invited Baldev Singh at tea at the Carlton Hotel and during the talk gave him a slip of paper to write down what he demanded for Sikhs. Baldev Singh replied that the Sikhs had thrown in their fate with the Congress and enquired if Jinnah would accept Pakistan if it was not of the shape and size that he demanded. Jinnah was reported to have taken back the small paper and replied that he would accept Pakistan even if it was as small as that tiny paper. We have, however, no proof of the authenticity of this story, for Baldev Singh's paper have not been published. He once told me that he would publish his memoirs, but he died soon after. There was another story too. It was said that Churchill had sounded Baldev Singh about prolonging his stay for a couple of days after Nehru left, to have discussion with the British Cabinet to consider some plan how the Sikhs could be fitted in with due safeguards in either of the two zones but this information

went to Nehru who insisted that Baldev Singh must accompany him back to India. This story seems to have some authenticity for it was conveyed by Mr. George Abell (later Sir George Abell) to one of his old Indian class-fellows, who was then in the I.C.S. in the Punjab service. It seemed that the Sikh leadership was totally confused and could not discuss a way out of the muddle that prevailed. They knew too, that there was no area where they had majority, which they could demand as the Sikh home-land. Jinnah had suggested an exchange of population at one stage and Sikh leadership had supported the suggestion in July, 1947, but the Congress Leadership did not care to take it up, possibly considering the Sikhs and their future to be a minor issue in their way of thinking.

The position of the Sikhs was very unenviable. The conditions were changing at a tremendous pace. Lord Mountbatton had arrived on the 22nd of March, 1947 to replace Lord Wavell. He came with a definite mission, to transfer power and quit India, come what may. This he announced at the swearing in ceremony address—an unusual procedure. Things were moving fast. The Sikh intelligentsia was thinking in the terms of a Sikh homeland which they could not forcefully place before their fellow-citizens in India or the British Rulers who were quitting. What the Sikh intelligentsia thought at that time is reflected in a concluding paragraph of a pamphlet written by two prominent Sikh teachers about the idea of a Sikh State, published in 1946. They wrote :

"The Sikh nation had been roused to national consciousness and now claims a territory in which it may be able to live in peace, free from political pressure and interference and to develop in accordance with its own ideals and urges. The Sikhs are numerically a small nation, about six millions, and of these about four and a half millions reside in the Punjab. The four million odd Sikhs have experienced that to live with honour and self-respect has been rendered impossible for them by their neighbours. The Muslims who wish to dominate the Punjab, have attacked the religion, culture and the civic, and political rights of the Sikhs through the Muslim-dominated

Government of the Unionist Party which ruled over the Punjab for 9 years from 1937 to 1946. The Hindus, on the other hand, have tried to absorb the Sikhs. They have let loose a terrific volume of propaganda to coerce the Sikhs into effacing the separate and historically evolved features of their nationhood, and have tried to make them lose their Sikh consciousness. A small people such as the Sikhs find that in the face of this double attack, one from the Muslim side and the other from the Hindu side, their very survival is threatened in these times when the technique of propaganda is so well developed and the pressure of majorities tells so heavily upon the existence of the minorities.... A small people, hardy, self-reliant, superb in character, splendid in ideals—is in danger virtually of being effaced. An appeal is made to the nations to take up the cause of the Sikhs and to arbitrate and arrange things as to guarantee the Sikhs a tolerable existence in their corner of the globe which he has occupied for centuries and which is his by right by domicile, association and development...

"The Sikhs are getting every day more apprehensive that the question of their future might be thrown overboard and Great Britain and the majority parties in India might proceed to arrive at a settlement without recognising the Sikhs' claim for a home. There have been too many instances of proud and sensitive nations being dismembered and gradually growing extinct for lack of political strength; and in order to avoid the fate of such they have made a strong determination to press for a State for themselves."*

The above reflections may be construed as tall thinking but such were the sentiments then. It had begun to be felt that Pakistan was inevitable and that the Congress had submitted to its creation. A quick solution had, therefore, to be found. The demand for homeland was there, but it could not be given a practical shape in the way both the major parties; the Congress and the Muslim League, were thinking. The only suggestion seemed practicable seemed to be splitting up of the Punjab, "so as to constitute a separate autonomous Sikh State in those areas of the Central, Northern, Eastern and South

Eastern Punjab in which the overwhelming part of the Sikhs is concentrated". The political situation became tense and fluid. Disturbances started everywhere. Lord Wavell had taken over the administration of the Punjab due to the deadlock that was created by the resignation of the Khizar Ministry and the impossibility of forming another due to the League being in minority. It was in such circumstances that Nehru had made a proposal to Lord Mountbatton in his first interview with him, as Alan Campbell Johnson in his book "Mission with Mountbatton" writes, "of a triparties administration of the province divided on communal lines, with central authority to deal with certain major non-communal questions." It was after that, that the staff meeting of the Viceroy discussed the report of the Punjab Governor, who wrote that "Giani Kartar Singh, an influential Sikh leader, had stated that in the absence of any agreement between the Congress and the League acceptable to the Sikhs, the Sikhs must insist on the partition of the Punjab and would resist with all their resources any endeavour to set up a Muslim League ministry there in the meanwhile." It was also said that Lord Wavell wanted to partition the Punjab but the Sikhs were not sounded at that time about this suggestion of Lord Wavell. It is a fact, however, that the Sikhs began thinking on the lines that the East Punjab at least should be saved and that half of Punjab was better than losing the entire Punjab in the light of the situation that seemed to be inevitable. Therefore, Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh did go to see Lord Mountbatton on the 19th April, 1947 with the demand which Alan Campbell Johnson in the same book describes sarcastically thus: "Mountbatton gave us an alarming but none-the-less amusing account of his interview with the Sikh leaders. He found himself confronted by some very stuffy old gentlemen with long beards and large kirpans who put on their glasses, looking just like benign professors full of peaceful intentions but telling a few fibs in the process. They all insisted that he must partition the Punjab and said that the Sikhs were the principal victims in the Rawalpindi riots." It was when the partition of the country seemed imminent and there were serious apprehensions that

the entire Punjab might go in Pakistan because of the weak policies of the Congress and its anxiety to seize power and get rid of League members from the interim Cabinet.

It was in the Constituent Assembly meetings in December, 1946, that a move was made about the partition of the Punjab, and Menon states :

"The Sikhs now began to press for procedural safeguards in section B, similar to those conceded to the Muslims in the Union Constituent Assembly, and started an elaborate scheme for the partition of the Punjab. There were signs of Hindu movement for the creation of a separate province of West Bengal, while the utterances of the Congress leaders of Assam showed that they were finding it difficult to decide upon their future course of action."¹⁰

The move at the time was from the Congress circles, because of the December clarification wherein the concluding words were, "There has never been any prospects of success for the Constituent Assembly except on the basis of an agreed procedure. Should a Constituent come to be filled by a Constituent Assembly and if in which a large section of the Indian population had not been represented, His Majesty's Government could not, of course, contemplate forcing such constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country." Nehru's interpretation was that this reference to unwilling parts of the country included unwilling parts of the provinces.

It was in fact the power hunger that motivated the Congress, particularly Sardar Patel to agree to accept the partition of the country. And Gandhi rightly remarked at the time when he said in a Press Conference "let it not be said that Gandhi was a party to India's vivi section" and added, "but every one today is impatient for independence. The Congress has practically decided to accept partition. They have been handed a wooden loaf in the plan (3 June Plan). If they eat it, they die of colic—if they leave it, they starve." It would have been more apt, if Gandhi had not used the word 'independence' and used 'power' instead, as a grant of independence had already been announced earlier by the Rulers. It may also be noted here that Sardar Patel had agreed to it much earlier. We are

told by V.P. Menon, his confidant :

"I told Patel that he had better face the fact that Jinnah had the support of influential British opinion in his claim to Pakistan and more important, he was supported by most of the high officers in the Army in India. My personal view was that it was better to divide India rather than let it gravitate towards Civil War. If we are agreed to partition, Jinnah could obviously not ask for those portions of Punjab, Bengal and Assam which were predominantly non-Muslim. The crucial problem was the basis on which power could be transferred. Sardar Patel was impressed by the argument." Menon further writes, "He assured me that if power could be transferred at once on the basis of Dominion status, he would use his influence to see that the Congress accepted it." This was in December, 1946, when Baldev Singh was following Nehru to England. Of course, Maulana Azad was bitter as he writes : "I also asked Lord Mountbatton to take into consideration the likely consequences of the partition of the country. Even without partition, there had been riots in Calcutta, Noakhali, Bihar, Bombay and the Punjab. Hindus had attacked Muslims and Muslims had attacked Hindus. If the country was divided in such an atmosphere there would be rivers of blood flowing in different parts of the country and the British would be responsible for the Carnage."¹¹ But the plan for the partition of the country had been long before drawn up and the Congress leadership had decided on it when it found the working with the representatives of the Muslim League was impossible. The British Rulers were well aware of this attitude. The moment Lord Mountbatton arrived in India, he embarked upon the plan on the same lines. And on this Menon writes, "Accordingly in consultation with his advisers, he drew up an outline of an alternative plan, the broad basis of which was the demission of authority to the provinces, or to such confederation of provinces as might decide to group themselves in the intervening period before the actual transfer of power. The plan provided that the members of the Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab would meet separately in two parts, i.e., representatives of the predominantly Muslim areas and

representatives of the predominantly non-Muslim areas; and if both sections of each of these Assemblies voted for partition, then that province would be partitioned. Under the plan, in the event of the partition of Bengal the predominantly Muslim district of Sylhet in Assam would have the option of joining the Muslim province. The plan also envisaged the holding of an election in the North Western Frontier Province to ascertain the wishes of the people of that province. Thus the responsibility for the partition of the country was to be placed on the shoulders of the Indian people themselves.

The Viceroy put this plan before the conference of Governors on the 15th and the 16th April. He acquainted the Governors with the talks he had with the party leaders and invited their opinion on the tentative plan.¹²

All this was public property and when the Sikh leaders met the Viceroy on the 19th April, they knew the fate decreed by the British with the consent of the Congress for them. Of course the British were out to quit, and that too hurriedly. Lord Mountbatton had come for that and he wanted shift the burden to anyone who might be ready. The following observations made by Lord Atlee, the then Prime Minister of Britain, in his memoirs, "A Prime Minister Remembers" shed ample light on the attitude of the British Government on the question of transfer of power to Indian hands. He wrote, "at the bitter end, of course, Winston was very strongly opposed and several Indian authorities like Anderson and Butler also thought that we were being precipitated. The argument always is of course, 'go slow and things will get better'. But there are occasions when if you hesitate and go slow, things get not better but worse. I was sure that this was one of the instances where the dictate 'go slow' could not be applied and we must go ahead and fix the date early and it come off."¹³ The anxiety of Sardar Patel to seize power at the earliest was also obvious from what he wrote to Gandhiji, who finding his colleagues so anxious, had washed his hands off the matter. Patel wrote to Gandhiji, "It has been difficult to explain to you the resolution about the Punjab. It was adopted after the deepest deliberations. Nothing has been done in a hurry or

without full thought. That you had expressed your views against it, we learnt from the papers. But you are of course entitled to say what you feel right. The situation in Punjab is worse than in Bihar. The military has taken control. As a result, on the surface things seem to have quietened down some what. But no one can say, when they may burst up again." Nehru wrote on the same lines, "about our proposals to divide the Punjab, this flows naturally from our previous decision. These were negative previously but now the time has come and merely passing a resolution and giving expression to our views means little. I feel convinced and so did most of the members of the Working Committee, that we must press for this *immediate division*, so that reality may be brought into the picture. Indeed, this is the only answer to partition as demanded by Jinnah." But this was not the answer. Jinnah knew the game he was playing and also his objective, since, as far back as 1940, he was counting on the Muslim majority area of Punjab and nothing further as Ch. Khaliqulzuman writes. This is further obvious, that had not the Congress accepted this, the Viceroy would have given the power to the Central Government. This is how the Viceroy was thinking. This is indicated in Leonard Mosley's "Last Days of British Raj" when he quoted for the Government of India records as to what alternatives the Viceroy was considering, if Jinnah did not accept the partition of the Punjab and Bengal. The alternatives were :

"1. If Mr. Jinnah does not accept the draft announcement proposed by Your Excellency there are two alternatives for parting with power ;

(a) That power will be parted with to the Central Government as at present constituted on a dominion basis.

N. B. This will be attacked by the Conservative Party as handing over Jinnah to the mercy of the Hindus. It might also attract the attention of Muslim countries outside India, particularly if it is followed by Muslim League propaganda.

(b) To transfer power to the existing Central Government on a Dominion status basis subject to one stipulation. The Muslim demand for province wide Pakistan could not be

sustained on any equitable argument. We came down as a defensible proposition on a truncated Pakistan. Jinnah has rejected this proposition. Therefore in order to meet the possible attack both from the Conservatives in England and outside India, I would include a condition in the Government of India Act 1935 or in the Treaty that will be concluded between Great Britain and India, that in the event of the Muslim League changing their opinion within 5 years and demanding truncated Pakistan, it will be open to the Governor General under the procedure laid down in the Announcements to authorise legislation by which Muslim majority areas could form a Government of their own. Till that take place the power will be parted to the existing Central Government who will be responsible for the administration of India including Pakistan.¹⁴

These could have been the alternatives if the Congress had not agreed to the partition of the country. What might have been can not easily be visualised. But Sardar Baldev Singh was there, a show-boy, who did not seem to be aware that he would shortly be the meat in the sandwich that was being cut.

Menon is responsible for the disclosure that it was during the consultations on the 14th of May, 1947 which Lord Mountbatten had with Nehru and Patel on behalf of the Congress, Jinnah and Liaquat Ali for the League and Baldev Singh on behalf of the Sikhs, that agreement to the New Plan (which was later announced on the 3rd June) of the partition of the country and with that the partition of the Punjab province was arrived at. The relevant heads of agreement that featured in the draft drawn by him were :—

- (a) That the leaders agreed to the procedure laid down for ascertaining the wishes of the people whether there should be a division of India or not ;
- (b) That in the event of the decision being taken that there should be only one Central Authority in India, power should be transferred to the existing Constituent Assembly on dominion status basis ;
- (c) That in the event of a division that there should be

two sovereign States in India, the Central Government of each State should take over power and be responsible to its respective Constituent Assemblies, again on a dominion status basis."

These clauses and other clauses not relevant to the issues involved here, would indicate that there was no reference to the homogeneity of the Sikh community in the new set-up. The times were too difficult and the anxiety of the two major parties was too intense to cut the Gordian knot, yet had Baldev Singh at that time been far-sighted and strong, and had he not played the sycophant to the Congress leadership, he could have brought in a clause to maintain the homogeneity of the Sikhs and also saved Nankana Sahib, but it seemed from the course of negotiations that went on that he never said a word to that effect. Some amongst the Britishers at the time wanted to help the Sikhs if they could, but their help was neither welcomed nor sought. Even Governor Jenkins supported the Sikh demands in his letter to the Viceroy, "I believe there is quite a lot in the claim of the Sikhs, and for that matter, of the other residents of the East Punjab for a share in the canal colonies of the West," he wrote, "and the Giani's (Giani Kartar Singh) idea that the Montgomery district should be allotted to the East is by no means as ridiculous as it sounds."¹⁵

It was only after the formulation and announcement of the plan that he wrote to the Viceroy on the 2nd June that he accepted the principle of partition as laid down in the plan but emphasised the measures to meet the demands about homogeneity when framing the terms of reference of the Boundary Commission. At that stage, however, it was not very relevant and incorporation of consideration of 'other factors' did not materially affect the position. Menon also made the disclosure that when the Viceroy called the meeting of the leaders on June 3, it was then that Baldev Singh expressed the wish that instructions to the Boundary Commission should be included in the statement, which the Viceroy was going to issue on behalf of his Majesty's Government but that he gave up that position when the Viceroy pressed him to do so. This position should have been taken earlier.

It was for this reason that Mountbatton both in the conference on June 2, and his broadcast on June 3, expressed his pain and sorrow at the plight of the Sikhs. He admitted that this question had been thoroughly discussed in London at a great length and that no single question took as much time as this one. He too had asked the Sikhs more than once if they really desired the partition of the Punjab which would necessarily divide their community, the division being to a greater or lesser degree, the degree being left to the Boundary Commission. For the purpose of national partition, however, no solution has been found to safeguard the interests of the Sikhs. He further said that it had not been found possible to adopt any principle other than the division between the Muslim majority and non-Muslim majority areas.

Had the Congress, however, watched and waited and had not shown its anxiety, things might have taken a different turn. But the Congress leaders could hardly curb their anxiety to capture power. This was reinforced by the clashes in the Cabinet of the Interim Government. The budget provisions of taxation on industrialists by Liaquat Ali, the Finance Minister exasperated the Congress members to such an extent that they were anxious to concede the creation of Pakistan, if only to get rid of the discordant elements in the Cabinet. No doubt, the announcement of Lord Mountbatton in his address at the swearing in ceremony was further indicative of the approaching partition of the country but even this must have been subject to the agreement between the concerned parties otherwise the alternative was there as stated by Mosley. The Sikhs were, however, helplessly watching the situation and knowing that the Congress was accepting the partition.

The inevitability of the partition led to efforts on the part of the Sikh leadership to take the line of partition as far away as possible. I was on a professional assignment during these days with the Raja of Faridkot with my Headquarters at Lahore. The Raja of Faridkot had some connection with Lord Mountbatton from the days, when he was a Supreme Commander of South East Asia Command, during the early war days with his Headquarters at Delhi. His residence then was

the Faridkot House situated on Bhagwan Das Road, belonging to Raja of Faridkot. Therefore, Lord Mountbatton knew the Raja of Faridkot well. The Raja of Faridkot suggested to me that it would be in the interest of the Sikhs if two Sikh leaders of the eminence of Master Tara Singh and Gian Kartar Singh and Sikh Princes like the Maharaja of Patiala and Raja of Faridkot who had rendered meritorious services in the war could go in a deputation to England to persuade the British Government to save the Gurdwara Nankana Sahib to the Sikhs or to provide some measures for its safeguard, it would not be a useless effort. I could not assess whether this suggestion was inspired by Lord Mountbatton or whether it was the Raja of Faridkot's own idea but it appealed to me. Something might possibly turn up if it was acted upon. Lord Mountbatton was reported to be leaving for England on 17th May, 1947, for final consultations with the British Cabinet. Accordingly I approached Gian Kartar Singh and Master Tara Singh to agree to accompany the two Princes if such a plan could be drawn up. Both of them agreed to this and accompanied me to Patiala. The Raja of Faridkot had a chartered plane awaiting departure at Karachi. I called on the Maharaja of Patiala and put the plan to him, that in the interest of the Sikhs he should take up the leadership of this delegation. He appreciated the significance and importance of the move and conceded too, that it might bear some fruits but he said that he was hesitant to accompany Master Tara Singh, and wondered: 'How he could accompany an agitator'. I was shocked at this weakness of the Prince. He said that he would consult Swaran Singh and Ujjal Singh saying, at the same time, that he was certain from knowledgeable quarters that the line of partition would be the Ravi river. I told him that I differed with him for the reason that it seemed impossible that Pakistan would ever be ready to give up Lahore. I could not persuade him to lead the delegation which I felt would certainly have had some results, particularly when Baldev Singh had earlier in December, 1946, avoided all approach to the British Cabinet independent of Pandit Nehru. The Maharaja of Patiala, however, asked me to see him in the evening to get his decision

regarding his taking a delegation to England. I came to know later that day that he had called Swaran Singh and Ujjal Singh to Patiala, had consultations with them, and when I called on him late in the evening to know his decision, I was told by him that he would take Ujjal Singh with him and leave for England. For a delegation consisting of Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh alone to go to England did not seem to be of much use since what they had to say, had been said to Lord Mountbatten. The proposal of the delegation did not materialise. The next I heard was that the Maharaja had left for Chail for the summer. How indecisive was the Sikh leadership at all levels can be judged from this.

The sittings of the Boundary Commission commenced in July, 1947, and from the way the proceedings were going, it seemed that the line of National division would be the line of partition ultimately of the country on the Punjab side. The stress, however, on the Sikh side was mainly to save Nankana Sahib Tract, a large area around Gurdwara Nankana Sahib with tehsil Chunian for India. And the Muslims knew too where the Sikh interest lay. It was in these circumstances that, while travelling by plane from Delhi to Lahore, the Nawab of Mamdot and I happened to be together and sitting on adjoining seats. The Nawab of Mamdot was the President of Punjab Provincial Muslim League then and also a very prominent and an important member of the High Command also. During our talks in the plane from Delhi to Lahore, he asked if there was a possibility of a compromise or understanding between the Sikhs and the Muslims at least about the line of partition. I enquired of him if it was possible that the Muslims would agree to Nankana Sahib being included in the East Punjab. The Nawab of Mamdot had his large Estate in Ferozpur district with his house in the village Mamdot. He said it was possible, and an understanding could be arrived at if the Sikhs could give up Ferozpur district and in exchange take the Nankana Sahib tract making it contiguous to East Punjab, in accordance with our claim put before the Boundary Commission, by-passing Lahore. I could see that he wished to save Ferozpur district to Pakistan because of his personal estate there, and I felt

that he would have been able to persuade his High Command to that line of action. I enquired of him, how this could be arranged. He told me that if the Sikh member of the Boundary Commission joined two Muslim members in their findings to that extent, then the Award of the Commission would be by majority to this limited extent, and the umpire, Lord Radcliff would not be able to interfere in this regard, and that would be a sort of mutual exchange. I had my apprehensions as to how far the Sikh leadership would be bold enough to escape the Congress influence and break away from it in order to save the Nankana Sahib tract on which they were building their case. Yet I told the Nawab of Mamdot that it was difficult to give up Ferozepore, but the proposal seemed worth consideration by both parties, and I would meet him later at Lahore, after sounding the Sikh leadership. Next day we had a huge Sikh Conference at Nankana Sahib; and it was probably on 28th July. I, too, went there and spoke to Giani Kartar Singh who readily welcomed the suggestion and said that he would speak to Master Tara Singh. I was made to understand later that the matter was discussed between them and others including Baldev Singh, and that it was dropped. One can imagine the sacrifices which the Sikh leadership made for the cause and support of the Indian National Congress.

References and Notes

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4. "The Transfer of Power in India" by V.P. Menon, p. 142.
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6. "India Wins Freedom" by A.K. Azad, p. 155.
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13. "A Prime Minister Remembers" by Lord Attlee, p. 210.
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V

Stiff attitude of the Sikhs towards the creation of Pakistan from 1939 onwards was not for the reason that they were against the Muslims, but rather on account of instinct for self-preservation which made them oppose Pakistan. The Sikh leadership had taken several steps to find safeguards for their community in the new proposed constitution to be set up by the two major parties, the Congress and the Muslim League. Beside approaching the Congress, they tried, time and again, to get Jinnah to find a solution to their problem, and in this connection they had several talks with him, but without evoking satisfactory response. Meanwhile, though he recognised the Sikhs as a separate entity, admitted their claims to a Homeland, he made no concrete suggestion in this regard. That Shiromani Akali Dal had authorised Baldev Singh to join the Unionist Ministry, of which the predominant Constituent was the Muslim League Block so recognised by Jinnah under the Sikander-Baldev Singh Pact, they even went to the extent of forming a coalition with the Muslim League in the N.W.F.P. Also Giani Kartar Singh went to participate in the conference of the Muslim League members gathered at Delhi in 1945, yet no offer was made to placate the Sikhs and find a safe place for them in the future set-up. Jinnah's contention that the Sikhs should point out an area where they could have

a Homeland, could not be counted as a sincere offer, because he knew and had himself conceded earlier in the Pakistan Resolution of March, 1940, that Pakistan could not claim that portion of the Punjab where the larger percentage of the Sikh population was concentrated, and which could easily be made into a Homeland of the Sikhs, particularly when Jinnah had himself suggested exchange of population as one of the solutions of the communal tangle. Such a suggestion, with an offer to the Congress for a limited exchange of population would have put the Congress to the test, and lessened the bitterness between the Sikhs and the Muslims, and, as such, diluted the opposition of the Sikhs to the creation of Pakistan. This was not done. Instead of this the Muslims insisted on the creation of Pakistan to include the entire Punjab, which naturally made the Sikhs stiffen their opposition. Naturally this hardening of the attitude against the creation of Pakistan without a solution of the problem of their future, had a reaction in the minds of the Muslims throughout the Muslim majority areas. The impression was created that it was, in fact, the Sikhs that were opposed to the creation of Pakistan, while the Congress and for that matter, the Hindus had no serious objection to it. This ignited the spark of communal frenzy in the Muslim majority areas and the Muslims attacked the Sikh minority. This started in December 1946, with the wholesale massacre of Sikh peasantry in the areas adjoining Kashmir in the Hazara district of N.W.F.P. The entire Sikh population of that area had to be evacuated to Abbottabad as refugees, while roving Muslim crowds scoured the area picking up isolated pockets of Sikhs. I visited the refugee camp at Abbottabad and had a discussion with the Governor, Sir George Cunningham, to evolve a way to concentrate the Sikh population in a few villages and rehabilitate them under a consolidation scheme of the lands in the entire area, but frenzy had spread to Rawalpindi district as well, where Sikhs were pounced upon by the Muslim crowds and slaughtered mercilessly. Thousands were killed during these riots in the rural areas in the Rawalpindi district, all putting up a fight while their women and children threw themselves into the wells to

protect their honour from the hands of the Muslim crowds. Stories of their bravery have become legends from those days of tragedy, telling how the Sikhs living in isolated pockets faced Muslim crowds, vastly larger in number, the men killing their own wives and children, and coming forward to fight with *Kirpans* and swords, and immolating themselves in the struggle.

Lt. General Sir Francis Tucker when writing of those days in his book "*While Memory Serves*" stated :

"From the Punjab came news of the worsening situation of the Sikhs in their battle with the Muslims : a bitter pill for the people to swallow, following as it did on the bombast of their leaders. Northern Command was forecasting two months for the Sikhs before they started on their war of revenge. Whatever the period of preparation, we all knew that the bloody business must continue to the end unless the Sikhs were completely stamped out by a powerful foe and that the Sikhs would start the new *Chakker*."² The New *Chakker* was not started in the sense the author conveys, but it was only a battle for self-preservation and self-defence, after a period of extreme suffering and patience. Such a heart-rending situation naturally evoked extreme anger in the areas where the Sikhs were concentrated in the Punjab. It provoked Master Tara Singh to unsheath his sword on the steps of the Assembly Chamber at Lahore, facing a crowd of Muslim legislators which was followed by a crowd of Hindu and Sikh legislators. He shouted out 'Pakistan Murdabad' and expressed his determination not to allow the creation of Pakistan in such circumstances. This was a parting of the ways between the Sikhs and the Muslims, and a repetition of past history, yet there was no other way, since the *Muslim League leadership* was unaware and would not make itself aware of the sentiments of the Sikhs.

Menon's narration of post partition events bears out the fact that the aggression started in the West Pakistan against the Sikhs and Hindus, and that this had a reaction, which led to reprisals on the part of the Sikhs in the East Punjab. Giving the sequence of events as he saw them, and he was in a position to see from inside, as he held the position being the senior

most Indian Officer at the Centre, he writes, "But soon after the announcement of the Radcliffe Award on 17th August a determined campaign to drive out the Hindus and the Sikhs was evident all over West Punjab and the North West Frontier Province. There were serious disturbances in Lahore, Sheikhupura, Sialkot and Gujranwala districts. A massacre on an unprecedented scale took place in Sheikhupura in West Punjab. This was followed by a violent anti-Muslim reaction at Amritsar. Thereafter the communal frenzy gripped the people on both sides of the border, taking a heavy toll of life, and creating an exodus of the population between the two dominions, the like of which had never before been known in history. The Hindus and the Sikhs in West Pakistan made for the Indian border by the shortest possible route—from Narowal to Dera Baba Nanak, from Lahore to Amritsar, from Kasur to Ferozepore, from Montgomery to Fazilka, from the Muslim State of Bhawalpur to Bikaner, from Mirpur Khas to Jodhpur. This they did by air, by train, by car, by bus—by almost every conceivable way of transport, as well as in foot convoys. What started as a trickle very soon developed into a flood, which, sweeping through East Punjab engulfed the city and province of Delhi and overflowed into the Western districts of the United Provinces."

Much has been said that it was the provocative flourishing of the sword by Master Tara Singh on 3rd March, 1947, at Lahore that led to the subsequent riots by Muslim mobs in different parts of the Punjab. The exact words have been quoted by G. D. Khosla in his book "Stern Reckoning" which is a survey of the events leading up to and following the partition of India. His version, and he is not partial to Master Tara Singh, is that after the Governor had summoned the Nawab of Mamdot, the leader of the Muslim League party, and asked him to form the Government and the latter had agreed, that a meeting was called of the Congress and the Panthic Party in the Assembly Chamber. There was certainly a suspicion in the minds of the Hindus and the Sikhs that the Muslim League Government had been responsible for the 'Calcutta Killings' and all that happened later at Noakhali. They did not want

history to repeat itself in the Punjab. It was in these circumstances that, while the members were coming out and a large crowd of Muslims, who had collected outside, kept up a continuous barrage of provocative Muslim League slogans, Master Tara Singh stood on the stairs facing the hostile Muslim crowd, and said "cut ke denge apni jan, magar nahin denge Pakistan." (We shall give away our lives but never concede Pakistan). These words could not be construed as provocative. What they conveyed was that we would resist the creation of Pakistan to the last.

The subsequent burning of non-Muslim shops in Hall Bazar, Katra Jaimal Singh and the surrounding non-Muslim areas at Amritsar, on 7th March, shows that the Muslim crowds were aggressive even in the area in which they were in minority. About 140 deaths were recorded and 275 injured on the same day at Amritsar. Multan had become a veritable inferno even on the 5th of March. Hindu areas were burnt down and even Dr. Kitchlew, a veteran nationalist Muslim Leader, was assaulted when he came out of the house of Seth Kalyan Dass, who was killed in the street, and whose *palatial house* was burnt down. But the greatest tragedy occurred at Rawalpindi on March 7 and 8 and continued till the middle of March. Several thousand Sikhs and Hindus—mostly Sikhs—were killed. The stories of the massacre of the Sikhs at Kahuta, Bewal, Doberan, Kazian, Nara, Moghal and Dhameli are matters of history. In almost every village in the Rawalpindi district, where the Sikhs lived, they were murdered and subjected to indescribable barbarities. "In Thoha Khalsa some Sikh women were thrown into a well, others jumped in of their own free will to save themselves from being raped. A mob of several thousand Muslims raided Hari Lal, the birth place of the Akali Leader Master Tara Singh. Master Tara Singh's house was razed to the ground and his uncle Gokal Singh was killed. Kuri Dafal and Dehra Khalsa were looted and burnt. In Kallar, the residents resisted the raiders for a time stubbornly, but the village was looted and burnt; a large number of residents murdered."³

The story of the wholesale massacre in Pothohar areas is

replete with hundreds of instances of Sikh women committing suicide or suffering deaths at the hands of their near relatives with stoic indifference, or jumping into wells or burning themselves, to save themselves from being raped or kidnapped. The modus operandi of the Muslim crowds was identical. Armed with all kinds of weapons, shouting slogans and beating drums, they would march to a selected village and would surround it from all sides. They would demand conversion to Islam and simultaneously start looting and burning the shops and houses. Seeing the crowds coming, most of the non-Muslims would leave their houses, run to the local Gurdwara or a house affording some protection, and would try to protect themselves and resist the marauders. The men would die fighting and the women would immolate themselves. This occurred in many of the villages where these massacres took place. The official figures of the non-Muslims killed were 2263 given by the Punjab Government but the unofficial estimate was three times that number. One fact that had become apparent in the tragedy is that the aggression was by the Muslims in the Muslim majority area. Retaliation came much later.

The defensive stand, that Master Tara Singh had taken as an undisputed leader of the Sikhs, inspired confidence in the Hindus as well; but it was after his bold declaration on the steps of the Punjab Assembly that he would not allow Muslims to dominate the Hindus and Sikhs, that made the Hindus of the Punjab also then accept him as their leader. A huge meeting was held on the lawns of Kapurthala House, Lahore, where he was proclaimed the leader of both the Hindus and the Sikhs. It is, however, incorrect that Master Tara Singh had made any preparation for the launching of an attack on the Muslims. No doubt, the Sikhs felt that they must take defensive measures and prepare the minorities for that objective, the intentions attributed to the Sikhs in the staff meeting of the Viceroy on the 27th August, 1947 of which the Press Attache to Lord Mountbatton makes mention are incorrect. He writes: "Mountbatton then turned to a general account of what was happening in the Punjab. The Sikhs, he

said, had launched an attack just as Giani Kartar Singh and Master Tara Singh before the 3rd June had told him they would. Mountbatton had expostulated with them at that time, stressing that once the British went, it would be Indian fighting Indian. But they were adamant and had in fact observed that they were waiting for us to go. The situation was now out of their control. In an area less than 200×150 miles, containing some 17,000 inhabited localities, and only about the size of Wales, some 10 million people were on the move. At this moment, through the withdrawal of all the Muslims, the police in the East Punjab were suddenly and catastrophically 7,000 understrength."⁴ This situation related to the period some time after the partition. The meeting that the Sikh leaders had with Lord Mountbatton was on the 19th of April, 1947, and there were other meetings which they had with Lord Ismay, his Advisor, in some of which I was also present. What was said then was only this that the Sikhs were fearful of attacks by their Muslim neighbours in the areas, where they were in minority and scattered, on the scale and mode and manner of Rawalpindi district, with the objectives of appropriating their fertile holdings; and unless steps were taken for their protection, the Sikhs would have to fight in defence of their lives and properties with all the means at their disposal. Perhaps, Lord Mountbatton and his advisor did not properly understand what the Sikh leaders told him, or an incorrect version has been put in his mouth about what transpired in the Staff Meeting on the 27th August, 1947. It is correct that the Akali Dal leadership in April 1947, had created an organisation known as Shahidi Dal under the Presidentship of Jathedar Udham Singh Nagoke of which the Secretary was Ishar Singh Mujhail, and Treasurer Sardar Bhag Singh, an Advocate of Gurdaspur. This organisation was entrusted with the defence of the Sikhs in the areas where they were scattered and in minority. There is no doubt too, that they collected funds, made attempts to procure arms and provide them to the Sikh peasantry in the scattered areas where they were in minority but it was purely for their defence. I think it was a timely measure, for it enabled the Sikh population to move to India after the

to the partition for the obvious reason, that this would jeopardise their position, and not only split them into two, but place an important and substantial part of the community under a Muslim majority, making their future uncertain and insecure. Also the scope of reference for the partition of the country was such that it did not give them much hope of saving their position. The Boundary Commission was instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of the Punjab on the basis of contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. In doing so, it had to take into account other factors. Other factors were made much capital of in those days by the leaders, who said that this would include the religious places of the Sikhs, particularly Nankana Sahib, but it was very obvious that this was a false hope to depend upon, and it proved to be. The Hindu and Muslim leadership hardly appreciated the position of the Sikhs while accepting this 'scope of reference', never caring how it would affect the Sikhs. The Sikh leadership felt much aggrieved. What the Governor of the Punjab wrote to the Government of India reflected the Sikh view: "Giani Kartar Singh said, that neither had viewed partition as being based on population alone. The Sikhs were entitled to their own land just as much as the Hindus or the Muslims. They must have their shrine at Nankana Sahib, at least one canal system, and finally arrangements must be made so as to bring at least three quarters of the Sikh population from the West to the East Punjab. Property must be taken into account as well as the population in the exchange, as the Sikhs on the whole were better off than the Muslims. The Giani said that unless it was recognised by His Majesty's Government, the Viceroy and the party leaders that the fate of the Sikhs was a wider issue there would be trouble..... They would be obliged to fight... that the Sikhs realised that they would be in a bad position, but would have to fight on revolutionary lines by murdering officials, cutting railway lines, destroying canals, headworks and so on."⁶

Discussing the situation as it developed in 1946, Moon in his book 'Divide and Quit' concedes that "The League, after

successes in the provincial elections made no effort to conciliate and re-assure the Sikhs and refused even to discuss their future. Throughout 1946 they were cold-shouldered or reviled and later—as will shortly be narrated—they were murderously assaulted and held up to ridicule." He further admitted that the position of the Sikhs was confused and in this regard he wrote: "For the Sikhs the plan meant division. They knew it, they accepted it and privately had their own plans for meeting it. The hard choice before them had long been cleared. They had to submit either to inclusion as a whole in Pakistan or to division between India and Pakistan through the partition of the Punjab. They had chosen the latter. They had long been thinking in terms of partition and the recent contact with the Muslims had strengthened their preference for it. Inevitably, by such partition, they would be split and if the contiguous area principle were to be rigidly applied, all the canal colonies and about 2 million Sikhs would fall to Pakistan. But the Boundary Commission was also to take into account other factors and the Sikhs clung to the hope that on the strength of these other factors the Boundary might be shifted westward so that they would not be split so badly. They were encouraged in this false hope by the ill-advised utterances of some British politicians." He further disclosed that in such a situation he approached the Sikh leadership through an 'Akali Friend' with the following suggestions as basis for negotiations with the Muslim League:—

"(1) A separate unit of Eastern Punjab with a position in Pakistan equal to that of any other unit, e.g. Sind and Western Punjab ;

(2) Special privileges for the Sikh minority in Western Punjab ;

(3) Special privilege for the Sikhs in Pakistan as a whole.

If the Sikhs took the course I suggested they would become the most important minority in Pakistan and it would be in the Muslims' own interests to make them happy, secure and contented." Then, he narrates the course of negotiations stating that the Sikh leadership was not responsive at the out-

set, but when they failed to get from the Congress a 'quasi autonomous East Punjab' the following suggestion came through a friend of Baldev Singh, as the basis of negotiations with the League :—

"(1) There should be a separate unit of East Punjab from which the four South Eastern and predominantly Hindu districts would be included (the four districts would have gone to India).

(2) The East Punjab unit should have a right to secede from Pakistan.

(3) The authority of the Central Pakistan Government should be confined to defence, foreign affairs, communication, currency and economic planning. All other powers should vest in the provincial units.

(4) A three-fourths majority of Sikh legislators should be essential for any change in the constitution.

(5) The Sikhs should have at least one third share in the armed forces of Pakistan."

These were not impossible terms, according to Moon and with him Gurmani (Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani, later Governor of Punjab) agreed, to write to Lord Ismay, who wrote him back that Baldev Singh had seen the Viceroy and told him that, 'there was no sign of either party making any concession to the Sikhs.' Accordingly this amateur attempt to produce a settlement collapsed ignominiously."

The Congress and the Muslim League were also well aware that the entire emphasis of the Sikhs was on the Nankana Sahib tract, which they were keen to bring with East Punjab. They should have also appreciated that 40% of the population was being affected by the partition and that 70% of their holdings had already gone in the Pakistan in the notional line of partition of the country. The desperation and the frustration to which the Sikhs were being driven should have been known to the leadership of both Hindus and Muslims, but no attention was paid to this aspect. At that time, strong feelings were prevalent among the Sikhs against Mahatma Gandhi too, who had gone to Calcutta and Noakhali to control the rioting there and act as "the one-man-boundary force",

whereas he left the Sikh and the Hindu minority in the West Pakistan to the mercy of circumstances. There was a very definite possibility of averting the tragedy, and the catastrophe that seemed imminent, if the British authorities and the leadership of the two major parties had been a little farsighted. A suggestion had been made by V. P. Menon to the authorities to approach and persuade Jinnah to declare Nankana Sahib, the Sikh shrine, as a sort of 'Vatican', a free area to which possibly Jinnah would have responded, and which would have a very calming effect upon the minds of the Sikhs, yet no approach of the kind was made, and the attitude of the British Authorities and also of the Congress leadership was most callous and unthinking. The Congress leadership should have also appreciated that the exchange of services personnel and the police elements from either side should not have been resorted to, until the conditions had stabilized in the post partition period. But even before the announcement of the line of partition was made, the services from either side had been exchanged and the minorities were left with no support and at the mercy of the marauding and looting crowds. The expectation of the Sikhs that the 'consideration of other factors' in the scope of reference of the Boundary Commission would bring them, not only Nankana Sahib, but also Montgomery district, which had a population of nearly a million Sikhs, as against a quarter of a million Muslims made to stay on there. Some writers are of the view that if, instead of resorting to the Boundary Commission and all that, the Congress leadership had been wise enough to have direct negotiations to save this area for the Sikhs and bring it to the East Punjab, it would not have been very difficult. But after having decided upon the partition, the Congress leadership was absolutely unconcerned as to the line of partition and what impact or effect it would have on the Sikhs. The sequence of events is aptly described by Leonard Mosley. He writes :

"The incidents in the Punjab at this moment had followed no set pattern. There had been ruthless massacre of the Sikhs in Rawalpindi in March, when the Muslims turned

upon them and in the welter of ferocity murdered 2000 of them. But since that time the killing had been only sporadic and the greatest demonstration of intercommunal fury had been confined to pyromania. It was easy, both sides discovered, to set fire to Indian cities, town or villages. In the narrow alleys of the bazaar section of Lahore or in the tortuous streets of Amritsar, all a person needed to do was to climb upon a roof, set it ablaze with a torch and then decamp swiftly down an alley, leaving a fire that often destroyed a whole district. In Lahore alone in 7 days the fire brigade was called out to deal with 267 fires. From an aeroplane at night, one could pick out the villages by the flames of the burning huts.”⁸

The great mistake, however, of the Viceroy, was to have announced the Award after the 15th of August, when both the dominions had been created. If the Award had been given on or about 1st of August and the Boundary Commission had been set earlier, then the population desiring migration on either side could have migrated without much danger to itself or much loss of life. People were not sure of the final partition and remained in their homes expecting that their areas would come in India or in Pakistan as they desired; once the Award was announced after the creation of the dominion and with the exchange of service personnel, the disturbance and massacre became inevitable, resulting in the moving and migration of the vast population.

Another factor that contributed to the massacre of the Hindu and Sikh population in the West Punjab, in what was Pakistan, was the wrong directive given by the Congress leadership to the minorities. Jinnah, while leaving India, had been a signatory to the appeal, which was made in the words, “Both the Congress and the Muslim League have undertaken to give fair and equal treatment to the minorities after the transfer of power. The two future Governments reaffirm these assurances. It is their intention to safeguard the legitimate interests of all citizens irrespective of religion, caste or sex. In the exercise of their normal civic rights all citizens will be regarded as equal and both the Governments will assure to all

people within their territories the exercise of liabilities such as freedom of speech, the right to form associations, the right to worship in their own way and the protection of their language and culture.” How Jinnah must have felt when he heard of the Congress President Kripalani asking, when replying to the enquiries from a member of the Congress Committee in Pakistan, whether they should fly the Pakistan flag on the day of the declaration of Pakistan, “This has nothing to do with the deliberation organised by the Pakistan Government.” Liaquat Ali retorted to this directive in the following words: “Let me tell Mr. Kripalani and other Hindu leaders that they are playing with fire. If Hindu Leaders like Kripalani succeeded in exciting people, it would be foolish to expect that there will be no repercussions. No Government in the world can prevent such repercussions, no matter how undesirable they may be. Unless the Congress President and the Hindu leaders give up these dangerous teachings, and join with us in restoring goodwill, and if they fail to stop acts of violence by their people, then God help Pakistan and Hindustan.” It was in such conditions that 10 million people moved on either side, causing voluntary exchange of population unprecedented and unheard of in the world history.

There could not be any estimate of those killed in this unprecedented civil war between the peoples of the two partitioned parts of the country, nor is there any estimate but assessment of those who saw the conditions is that six lakh people must have been killed on both sides of the border. There is no doubt, however, that five million Hindus and Sikhs, which included the entire Sikh population of the area, migrated from West Pakistan and a large number of Muslims left India. A modest estimate of the Sikhs killed in the massacre can be stated as nearly two lakhs, about 2½% of the entire Sikh population. About Rs. 700 crores’ worth of property was left in Pakistan. About a lakh of girls on both sides were kidnapped and converted. One can comprehend the sacrifice and the suffering due to the partition.

Historians will always be confronted with the question: Could this unprecedented tragedy involving such vast human

suffering have been avoided by an exchange of population by peaceful methods? It would be appreciated that such an exchange had ultimately to be organised and for the purpose, a joint Evacuee Organisation was set up in August 1947, under the name of Military Evacuee Organisation, when both the dominions mutually agreed to have such an evacuation, when 10 million people were on the move on both sides of the border on account of the civil war that had started. Jinnah had suggested the exchange as far back as the 10th December, 1945, and again on November 15, 1946, after the Noakhali massacre in East Bengal. He had said, then, referring to the driving of the Hindus from Noakhali that the transfer of population was already in action, and it was only necessary that some machinery should be evolved for effecting it peacefully. Another Muslim leader, Raja Gazanfer Ali, went to the extent of stating bluntly on December 19, 1946, that an exchange of population was a necessary corollary to the establishment of Pakistan. Of course, he expressed lip sympathy for the minorities by stating that all possible help would be given to the non-Muslim minorities in the Muslim majority areas, but added, "after what has happened, (wide-spread communal riots) the present position cannot be accepted with equanimity, and minorities which are too scattered and helpless owing to the smallness of their number must not be left as tempting prey to those who can arrange and organise lawlessness." The Sikh leadership, too, had become very much perturbed after the March riots of 1947 and Swaran Singh, the then leader of the Panthik Assembly party, said on 10th July, 1947, that an exchange of population was the only solution which would be advantageous to both Hindustan and Pakistan, and had suggested that the line of division of the country should be such as would facilitate a transfer of population and property.* Had this measure of an exchange of population been adopted in early July when the formation of Pakistan had already been decided on for more than a month and had the leadership been farsighted and realistic enough to see the shape of coming events, a greater part of the tragedy would have been avoided. Both the Congress leaders and more particularly Nehru and

Patel, were busy grabbing power and were not much worried about the fate of minorities on either side. Gandhiji, of course, had unequivocally rejected the idea as far back as 2nd December, 1945, when he had said, "It (exchange of population) is unthinkable and impracticable. Every province is of every Indian, be a Hindu, Muslim or of any other faith. It won't be otherwise even if Pakistan came in full. For me, any such thing will spell bankruptcy of wisdom or statesmanship or both. The Logical consequence of any such step is too dreadful to contemplate. Is it not bad enough that India should be artificially divided into so many religious groups?" But these zones had been decided upon as far back as the 16th May, 1946. Again, the country was carved into two on 3rd June, 1947, yet no decision was taken about the exchange of population. Could there be a greater bankruptcy of wisdom or statesmanship?

The result was that sixty-five lakh Muslims of whom fifty-two lakh were from the East Punjab, 3,60,000 from Delhi and the rest from other areas had to migrate to Pakistan, and fifty-five lakh Hindus and Sikhs had to leave East Pakistan, and with what suffering and what material loss, is known to every Indian of that generation.

Another question that will always pose itself to the historians will be, "was the partition unavoidable?" It is certainly stated by Hindu writers that the partition was the result of the intransigent attitude of one man in the Muslim League—Jinnah—who exploited the situation then existing, played his cards well, finessed perfectly, and was able to carry his ambitions to the logical end, and obtained Pakistan for his people, the Musalmans. The General Elections of 1946 had hardened the attitude of the Muslim League against any common links between the two separated States, i.e., Muslim majority areas and the rest of India. The successes of the Muslim League nominees on 78 Muslim seats out of 86 total Muslim seats in Punjab gave a great fillip to the fundamental basis of the Pakistan Resolution in Punjab, which provided a key to the Muslim problem. The Congress won 51 seats in Punjab; the Panthic Akali Sikhs 23, and the Unionists, the main ruling

party which professed to be the joint party, only 20 seats out of which 8 were Muslim seats. The Muslim League strength rose soon after to 79, thus giving it the largest single party position in the State. This entirely changed the situation in favour of *League ideology*. Similarly, the Muslim League captured 54 seats out of 66 Muslim seats, in United Provinces. In Bombay, The Muslim League captured all the 30 Muslim seats and similarly in Madras the Muslim League bagged all the 29 Muslim seats. In Bengal, the Muslim League won 113 out of 119 Muslim seats. In Sind also, the Muslim League had captured 27 seats and one Muslim independent joined the party later, thus giving the strength of 28 out of 35 total Muslim seats. The Nationalist Muslims captured only three, and another independent group under Mr. G.M. Syed, who was a dissident of the Muslim League captured four. The so-called intransigent attitude of the League leadership thereafter was the result of the General Elections of 1946.

After such successes, the Viceroy seemed to reach the conclusion that the Muslim League demand in the Muslim majority areas would have to be conceded, and, at the same time, that there would be no compelling non-Muslim population to remain in Pakistan against their will. The fact, according to the Viceroy's view was, that there would have to be at least two divisions of the Punjab. This was the opinion of Menon, that probably, if Lord Wavel had remained, then the partition would have been along these lines. The question, however, remains, was it inevitable or could it have been avoided? There can be no doubt that next to Jinnah, the two persons that were responsible for this partition were Jawahar Lal Nehru and Patel. Patel had agreed to the partition much earlier, even as far back as October, 1946. At that time, these two dominated the Congress, having pushed Gandhiji to the periphery in the matter of the decision as regards the partition. It seems that in the end, Patel had even been able to bring Gandhiji round to his point of view that India should be partitioned. This is what Maulana Azad says in his book, "*India Wins Freedom*". He writes: "Later that day, Gandhiji met Lord Mountbatten. He saw him again

the next day and still again on 2nd April. Sardar Patel came to him soon after he returned from his first meeting with Lord Mountbatton and was closeted with him for two hours. What happened during this meeting I do not know. But when I met Gandhiji again I received the greatest shock of my life, for I found that he too had changed. He was not still openly in favour of partition but he no longer spoke so vehemently against it. What surprised and shocked me even more was that he began to repeat the arguments which Sardar Patel had already used for over two hours. I pleaded with him but could make no impression on him."¹⁰

There is another version. According to Menon, Gandhiji had given a specific offer to Jinnah on the 24th September, 1944, that he would recommend to the Congress the acceptance of the demand for the separation provided in the League's Lahore Resolution of 1940 on the assumption that India was not to be regarded as two or more nations, but as one family consisting of many members, including the Muslims in the majority areas who wanted separation. Gandhiji further suggested that he would agree, that such areas be demarcated by the Commission and approved by the Congress and the League and that approval would also be ascertained through a plebiscite. The understanding would be that the areas that voted for separation would be given a separate State soon after India was free, and both the States would enter into a treaty for the efficient and satisfactory administration of foreign affairs, defence, internal communications, customs, commerce and the like, which must continue to be matters of common interest between the parties concluding the treaty. The offer further was that such a treaty should also comprise conditions and terms about the safeguarding of the rights of the minorities in the two separate States. But this offer was rejected by Jinnah for the reason as he stated, that the offer did not concede the fundamental principle of the Lahore Resolution that the Musalmans of India were a Nation. Maulana Azad is responsible for the statement that, when the deadlock ensued between the League and the Congress about the settlement of the communal problem, and the transfer of

power, when Lord Mountbatton arrived, then he, Maulana Azad, had suggested arbitration. He describe the occasion in the following manner, "I felt that the differences between the Congress and the League had reached the stage where the agreement could only be attained through the mediation of a third party. My opinion was that we might leave the matter to Lord Mountbatton. Let the Congress and League agree to refer the question to him and accept the arbitration. Neither Jawahar Lal Nehru nor Sardar Patel would agree to this suggestion. They did not like the idea of arbitration and I did not press the point further,"¹¹ Here it may be noted that Master Tara Singh had made exactly the same proposal at the time of the Simla Conference a year earlier. It was an irony of fate that the two persons, Patel and Nehru, who had been the most faithful followers of Gandhiji should have been most insistent on partition despite his (Gandhiji's) opposition to it. Patel might have controlled the organisation and had the greatest say in that regard, yet the controlling individual in his decision was Nehru, and Nehru cannot escape the sole responsibility for the partition. The price that was paid by both the parties for this partition was exceedingly high, both in terms of human suffering and in terms of material loss. Many years later, Nehru, thinking of the past said, "We consented because we thought that thereby we were purchasing peace and goodwill though at a high price. I do not know, if I had the same choice, how I could decide." This in itself indicates his weak nature and the way he was driven to this decision.

There is yet another plausible version of the reasons that persuaded the Congress leaders, particularly Patel, to get the country partitioned. It comes from Chaudhry Mohammad Ali, one-time advisor of Liaqat Ali Khan, the Muslim League Finance Minister in the Interim Government on Finance, later the Prime Minister of Pakistan. He writes :

"The undeclared Civil War between Hindus and Muslims being waged in various parts of the country, the dissensions in the Cabinet between the Congress and Muslim League blocks and the Congress irritation over the policies of the

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Finance Department had strained nerves to the breaking point. On top of all this came Liaqat Ali Khan's budget and the bitter battles inside and outside the Cabinet to which it gave rise. Hindu capitalists pointed out to Patel that a United India with poverty-stricken Muslims, who would constantly demand, in the name of social justice a share in the wealth of Hindus would be a nightmare; the sooner they were separated from Hindus the better.

"Patel was psychologically prepared for parting of the ways and, with his usual determination; promptly set about it. Abul Kalam Azad wrote: "Among Congressmen the greatest supporter of partition was Sardar Patel—who threw his weight in favour of partition out of irritation and injured vanity. He found himself frustrated at every step—by Liaqat Ali Khan as Finance Minister.

"He was convinced that the new State of Pakistan was not viable and could not last. 'On March 4, only three days after the battle of budget started, Patel wrote to a friend in Bombay, if the League insists on Pakistan, the only alternative is the division of Punjab and Bengal.....A strong Centre with the whole of India—except Eastern Bengal and a part of Punjab, Sind and Balochistan enjoying full autonomy under the Centre will be so powerful that the remaining portions will eventually come.'"¹²

Justification is found in the following circumstances for partition. There was the danger of a perpetual Civil War between the two communities, were the unity of the country insisted upon. There was also the situation that the conflict and the clash in the Interim Government was of the nature that made cooperation and coordination impossible. Again, there was the certainty that, even if a loose centre was evolved, yet the Muslim majority states would secede and opt out from the Union, leading again to partition. Still again, there was the feeling that the attainment of freedom might be endangered if there was any delay in the decision, either way, and that the choice lay between the prolongation of foreign dominance and partition. It is again possible, as some thinkers of the time would make us believe, that there was a feeling among

the leaders of the Congress that the partition was a temporary phase, as Pakistan would not be a viable State, politically, economically, geographically, and more so, militarily. It is also probable that the leadership got so confused that it was driven to it, despite its feeling otherwise. This is reflected in Nehru's musing later, "Well, I suppose it was the compulsion of events and the feeling that we could not get out of that deadlock of morass by pursuing the way we had done ; it became worse and worse. Further, a feeling that even if we got freedom for India, with that background, it would be a very weak India, i.e. a federal Ind'ia, with far too much power in the federating units. A larger India would have constant troubles, constant disintegrating pulls. And also the fact that we saw no other way of getting the freedom—in the near future, I mean. And we accepted and said, 'Let us build up a strong India. And if others do not want to be in it : well, how can we and why should we force them to be in it.' The Historian suspects that this pithily sums up what were then the views of the leadership. Was it the feeling of building up a Hindu India, strong and unitary, basically on the same lines, and on the same basis as what Jinnah had visualised and opposed. These were the feelings that rightly disturbed the minorities at the time and have continued to disturb them till now. In view of what the Congress leadership had professed during the more than 80 years of its life, was it not just and proper that it should have refused to agree to the partition. Another view that can be justifiably inferred from the decision taken at those crucial times of the Indian history, is that it was a hunger for power of the leadership that motivated this decision on the partition of the country. There was certainly the alternative for the leadership of the Congress to refuse partition and perhaps prolong foreign dominance which would have been short. Michael Brecher in his book "Nehru, A Political Biography" sums up correctly, when he writes :

"It is easy to speculate on what might have been. But in terms of their often stated goal of a United India, would it not have been wise for Nehru and his colleagues to reject the Mountbatton plan which in any case was on the verge of

collapse? By so doing they would have probably won independence and unity. Having wasted 30 years, could they have not waited a little longer as Gandhiji suggested? Perhaps they did not because they had been totally demoralised by events of 1942 and beyond."¹²

There could be no better or more bitter exposition of the responsibility of the Congress leadership for the partition of the country than what Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, more known in India as Frontier Gandhi, said to the Indian visiting pressmen at Jallalabad (Afghanistan) during the visit there of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in early June, 1969, when in a reminiscent mood, the Frontier leader said that he and Gandhiji alone had opposed partition of India. He had expressed his views to the Congress Working Committee, but Congress leaders at the time were too eager to acquire power and enjoy fruits of office.¹⁴

Perhaps, another reason for the partition was what Sisa Dhar Sinha in his book, "*Indian Independence in Prospective*" makes us believe, "It is also clear that, that impending sacrifice of Bengal, the Punjab and other parts of India was made all the easier, as none of the prominent Congress leaders in effective command of the Congress organisation in this crucial period had any emotional ties with any of the areas about to be sacrificed for the sake of a so called settlement of the Indian problem. Regional rivalry had been the bane of Indian history throughout the ages and never more devastating in its effect than its ugly manifestation during the Gandhian period of the Indian National struggle. As though the Hindu-Muslim discord was not bad enough, the rivalry within the Congress leadership, especially in its higher echelons for power and position made the situation entirely worst. The constant threat of disunity in post-independent India, or linguistic, economic or other ground is, without doubt a direct consequence of that rivalry."¹⁵

Menon also writes: "The objective of His Majesty's Government was to obtain only a unitary Government for British India and the Indian States, if possible within the British Commonwealth, through the medium of the Constituent

Assembly set up in accordance with the Cabinet Mission Plan. Since, however, the basis of the Cabinet Mission Plan was agreement of the two major parties, there could be no question of compulsion : and if Lord Mountbatton by October 1946, found that there was no prospect of reaching a settlement on the basis of Unitary Government, he was to report the steps which he considered to be taken for the handing over of power on the due date."¹⁶

Gandhiji admitted in a prayer meeting during his address, "The British Government is not responsible for partition. The Viceroy had no hand in it. In fact, he is opposed to division as Congress itself. But if both of us, Hindus and Muslims, cannot agree on anything else, then the Viceroy is left with no choice."

Maulana Azad, all the while during his Presidentship of the Congress believed, that defence, communications and foreign affairs could be the only subjects which could be dealt with on an All-India basis and other subjects must obviously be provincial responsibility, though there may be a third list, where the Provincial Legislature should have the option to decide whether to retain them within their own sphere or delegate them to the Centre. Such arrangements, he felt, would eliminate from the minds of the Muslims all domination by the Hindus, and if later, there was sufficient confidence in the Centre on the part of the Provinces, the latter could delegate provincial subjects to the Centre. He described that he encountered difficulty in carrying his point of view in the Working Committee of the Congress, which revealed communal feeling in some of the members. He writes in his book, "There were elements of comedy even in the midst of the great tragedy. There have always been in the Congress some men who have posed as nationalists, who are in fact utterly communal in outlook. They have always argued that India has no unified culture and have held that whatever the Congress may say the social life of the Hindus and the Muslims was entirely different. It was surprising to find that members with these views had suddenly appeared on the platform as the greatest upholders of Indian unity.

"They opposed the resolution vehemently and the grounds they gave were, that the culture of National India could not be divided. I agreed with what they were saying and had no doubt that what they now said was true. I could not have forgotten that all their lives they opposed such a view. It was so strange that now at this eleventh hour, they should be the persons to raise the cry for the undivided India."¹⁷ This text appears in his book when he discusses the passage of official resolution for the division of the country in the Congress Working Committee, but, by and large, they apply to most of the members of the Congress, particularly to Sardar Patel.

Looking at the decision about the partition of the country in this perspective, it can safely be said that the history of the Congress in the Gandhian era from 1920 to 1947 had been the *history of missed opportunities*. What might have been is certainly *conjectural* and constitutes flights into the realms of imagination, yet, certain features of those missed opportunities indicate lack of foresight and understanding on the part of the leadership.

It was in 1921 when the non-cooperation movement was at its height, that Hindu-Muslim unity was absolute due to the support that the Congress was giving in the Khilafat Agitation, and the Indian masses were backing the Congress leadership, that an offer was made by the British authorities for a Round Table Conference in order to avoid demonstrations against the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII, and now Duke of Windsor, who was on a visit to India to inaugurate the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. The British Government was keen that the Prince of Wales should have a welcome. This offer was brought by Pandit Malavia from Lord Reading to C.R. Dass who was keen to accept it. But when it was taken to Gandhiji, he put several conditions including the release of Ali Brothers, which the British Government could not agree to at the moment, but it promised consideration. Gandhiji rejected the offer outright. Deshbandhu was beside himself with anger and disgust. "The chance of a life-time has been lost" wrote Subash Chander Bose in 'Indian Struggle'. Gandhiji shortly after initiated the move to have a Round Table

Conference, but the British would not have it as the Prince of Wales had already left and they had no need of any help.

Again, Gandhiji refused to go to the First Round Table Conference in 1930. He could have easily had the terms in 1930 which he had later in 1931, when he went alone as the sole representative of the Congress without any advisor or supporter, in the Round Table Conference which was still filled with the stooges of the Rulers. There are reasons to believe that if there had been participation in the Conference in a constitutional manner, and sincere efforts had been made to evolve a settlement, the so called Communal Award, the bane and the main hurdle in the creation of Indian nation would have been avoided.

Yet again, as stated elsewhere, if the Congress had agreed to constitute a coalition with the Muslim League in 1937, after the General Elections in U.P., and had enlisted its cooperation in the constructive work of running the State, the Lucknow Resolution of 1938, and the Pakistan Resolution of 1940 would not have come into being and who knows, the partition might have been avoided.

Still again, the resignation of the Congress Ministry in 1939 was another blunder in its history of missed opportunities. The following comment of V.P. Menon in his book, "The Transfer of Power in India" is very illuminating and lucid. "Lord Linlithgow had come to India full of zeal for the federal plan which he hoped to inaugurate during his time. His efforts were partly frustrated by the Princes, who had put forward various demands which were difficult to meet by the Congress which wanted no whittling down of responsibility at the Centre; by the Muslim League, which was opposed to a unified Centre and last, but not the least, by a Political Department where half-hearted efforts could not, or would not, rise to the occasion.

"With the outbreak of war, Lord Linlithgow decided to shelve the question of federation. Thereafter he concentrated his whole attention on the winning of the war. In the beginning he tried to enlist the support of the Congress, and of Gandhiji in particular, in the war effort. But his purpose was

to carry on the Government with a minimum of change and this resulted in purely negative policies, so that such initial enthusiasm as some of the leaders evinced in the cause of the democracies soon evaporated. Once the Congress Ministry resigned their offices, and particularly after the passing of the Ramgarh Resolution in the spring of 1940, Lord Linlithgow resolutely turned his back on the Congress.

"With the Congress in opposition, Lord Linlithgow had to look to Jinnah and the League, whose cooperation and support he could not afford also to lose. This led, as a natural consequence of the building up of the Muslim League.

"For this state of affairs the Congress must take its due share of blame. Had it not resigned from its position of vantage in the provinces, the course of Indian history might have been very different. By resigning, it showed a lamentable lack of foresight and political wisdom. There was little chance of its being put out of office; the British Government would surely have hesitated to incur the odium of dismissing a Ministry which had the overwhelming support of the people. Nor could it have resisted a unanimous demand for a change at the Centre a demand which would have been all the more irresistible after the entry of Japan into the war. In any case, it is clear that, but for the resignation of the Congress, Jinnah and the Muslim League would never have attained the position they did."¹⁸

Maulana Azad held the view that the two persons chiefly responsible for the partition of the country were firstly Krishna Menon, whose advice was invariably wrong, and who was responsible for changing the views of Nehru, and secondly, Sardar Patel who was motivated by communal feelings. Azad writes thus :

"Among Congressmen the greatest supporter of partition was Sardar Patel, but even he did not believe that partition was the best solution of the Indian problem. He threw his weight in favour of partition out of irritation and injured vanity. He found himself frustrated at every step by the Veto put on his proposals by Liaqat Ali Khan as Finance Minister. It was, therefore, in sheer anger that he decided that if there was no

other alternative, partition should be accepted. He was also convinced that the new State of Pakistan was not viable and could not last. He thought that the acceptance of Pakistan would teach the Muslim League a bitter lesson. Pakistan would collapse in a short time and the provinces which had seceded from India would have to face untold difficulty and hardship."

According to Moon, the crucial point before the Congress during the war was not how to get rid of the British Rule, but how to preserve the unity of the country and the Congress missed that opportunity. Discussing the issue involved he wrote : "But, despite these feelers, up till the outbreak of war, there had been no effective reconciliation between the Congress and the League ; and when the war came, the gulf widened. Confused by Gandhi's pacifism and blinded by their own violent antipathy for the British Rule, the Congress leaders in September, 1939 were unable to review coolly the realities of the situation. To remove or even lighten the British yoke in the time of war was impossible , but the days of British Rule were obviously numbered and already the crucial problem was not how to get rid of the British but how to preserve the unity of the country, when they had gone. Jinnah and the League had already appeared as a potential source of disruption. The threat to the unity was quite evident even before the League's 1940 resolution. A united effort in the war might have averted it and paved the way for settlement thereafter. If the Congress had been willing to cooperate and accept for the duration of the war the existing constitution with its inevitable limitations, the moderate Muslim elements, still quite strong in the Punjab and Bengal and not yet wedded to extreme course or completely under Jinnah's thumb, would have gladly joined hands with them in the forming a Government at the Centre and thus the foundation might have been laid for a Government for a united and independent India when the war was over. Instead, the Congress decided to stand aloof, cooperating with nobody, and coming to terms neither with the British nor with Jinnah. In October 1939 the Congress Ministries in the provinces were ordered to resign from office and this proved to be the prelude

to retirement into jail. Jinnah was thus left with a clear field and he took full advantage of it."¹⁸

There is no doubt that the Sikhs were the greatest sufferers in terms of the killed and also in the matter of material losses. But what was the sum total of the results of the partition in this regard. I, along with a colleague, was requested by the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal in early February 1948, to go and meet the Central Ministers, discuss with them the problem of rehabilitation of the vast multitude of Sikhs that was lying stranded in the different districts of the Punjab and outside, and the lakhs that were still to come, and were on the move from West Pakistan to India. Those were the tragic times and my colleague and I went to Delhi with our tale of woe, waiting upon, on each Minister and acquainting him with the situation in the Punjab. In the course of our interviews with the Central Ministers, we also met Dr. Ambedkar, who was to be entrusted later with the constitution making of the country, a tremendous and historic job, given to a man who had always opposed the Congress and Gandhiji. It was about the end of February and Gandhiji had been shot on the 30th of January, 1948. A veil of tragedy and sorrow seemed drawn over the atmosphere but to us, a more important and pressing problem was the vast multitude of people that lay starving in many refugee camps spread throughout the weak and truncated East Punjab. My colleague was an old friend of Dr. Ambedkar, having been a member of the Central Assembly with him for years. He was naturally free with him. He related the story of the sufferings of the Sikhs and, of course, with it pleading the case of 40% of the Sikh population that had been displaced and was then homeless practically living in the camps. He enumerated their tragic losses, of the vast fertile areas and colonies which the Sikhs had reclaimed in the districts of Lyallpur, Sheikhpura, Montgomery and other places, then included in Pakistan. He described the vast commerce and business built up by Sikh labour and hard work in the Pothohar Area and N.W.F.P. "All this is lost to the Sikhs and with them to the Hindus also," pleaded my colleague.

Dr. Ambedkar listened to all this silently, yet smilingly. I was pained at his smile. It was not a tale that should evoke a smile. After hearing for quite some time, Dr. Ambedkar asked my friend, if he really felt the Sikhs were the greatest sufferers by the partition of the country. My friend was astonished at the query. He retorted back rather hotly, "Is there any doubt about it in your mind?" Dr. Ambedkar again smiled, and this time the smile was more apparent and said something to the following effect: "Dear friend, I had always the impression that you are a shrewd politician and a student of history. Sikhs were only 3% in the town of Ludhiana to which you belong. The only tehsil which you could claim and where your number was the highest was Moga tehsil where you Sikhs were 45%. In the entire United Punjab, you were 13%. You were a minority at the mercy of the two communities, Hindus and Muslims, even in the province of Punjab where you were concentrated. You played an equal role with the other two communities, numerically much bigger than you, because of your inherent strength, dynamism, drive and hard work. But politically you were no-where. Partition has been tragic indeed for the country causing material loss and tremendous human sufferings, but today after this migration, though forced, you Sikhs have been the greatest gainers politically and would be the greatest gainers economically hereafter. Your community today, from all that I hear and see, has come to be in majority in the six Sikh States with an area of about 12 thousand square miles. You are likely to be in majority or are already in majority, however small it may be, in 8 districts of Jullundur division. Here is an area of nearly fifty thousand square miles where you will be in majority in a short time to come, when the conditions stabilise and this forced exchange of population is complete. Your community for once in its history of more than 400 years has a 'Homeland' which you can call your own. Hereafter you have a territory with majority. You have got a language of your own, traditions, history and heroes. You have got a religion, common bond amongst yourselves and by all canons of nationhood, you are a people having a homeland and yet

you tell me that you have suffered terribly. History depicts that sufferings have been always undergone for such objectives. How long would any party in India be able to crush you or treat you badly, when you have got a territory of your own which on the admitted and accepted principles of self-determination can opt out if the exigencies of time and situation demand."

This was end of February, 1948, when the Union of Sikh States in the shape of Patiala and East Punjab States Union was yet to come ; and the demand of Punjabi Suba was yet to hold the field. This was an eye-opener to me, which I hardly could visualise earlier, and this was an eye-opener to the Sikh leadership later. Destiny had something in store for the Sikhs.

The procedure that was adopted for knowing the wishes of the people concerned in the partition was only a semblance without substance. Members from the non-Muslim majority areas of the East Punjab decided by 50 votes to 22 that the province be partitioned, and that the East Punjab should join the existing Indian Constituent Assembly. Similarly, the members of the Muslim majority areas of the Punjab decided by 69 votes to 27 against the partition of the province. There was no reference anywhere about the position of the Sikhs as such or maintenance of their homogeneity. Here again Baldev Singh had badly let down his community.

There is no doubt that on the eve of the partition, i.e., on the 22nd July 1947, the members of the partition council met for the purpose also for consideration of the fate of the minorities in each of the two dominions. Baldev Singh was present, and it was declared that both the dominion Governments were determined to establish peaceful conditions in which the process of partition might be completed and also resolved that, "Both the Congress and the Muslim League have given assurances of fair and equitable treatment to the minorities after the transfer of power. The two future Governments reaffirm their assurances. It is our intention to safeguard the legitimate interests of all citizens irrespective of religion, caste or sex. In exercise of their normal civil rights, all

citizens will be regarded as equal and both the Governments will assure all people within their territories that exercise of liberties such as freedom of speech, the right to form associations, the right to worship in their own way and the protection of their language and culture.

"Both the Governments will further take care that there shall be no discrimination against those who before 15th August may have been political opponents."

But it should, however, have been realised at that time that these guarantees of protection by both the Governments to their respective minorities was only a pious wish, when according to the partition agreement, the Armed Forces were being divided in their entirety, and the Police Forces and services had already been divided, and had opted and left for their respective places. They should have been left on either side to protect the minorities considering the strong emotions that were swaying the people of both the dominions.

Maulana Azad stated in his book that he had advised and pressed for a unified command of the Army, and had been supported in this by Lord Mountbatten, and looking back at the events ten years later, he was convinced, "If the army had remained unified, we would have avoided the rivers of blood which flowed immediately after independence." His comment was, "I think it was a dangerous decision. It divided the Army on the basis of the communities. The Muslim units mostly went to Pakistan and the Hindu and Sikh units remained wholly in India. This injected communal poison into the Army which till then had been free from it. When after 15th August, the blood of innocent men and women flowed on both sides of the frontiers, the Army remained a passive spectator. What is worse in some cases, Military men even joined the strife." His further comments on the services were :

"Regarding the services, I suggested that they should not be divided on a communal basis. Political necessity had compelled us to accept the partition of the country, but there was no reason why officials should be uprooted from their own areas. I felt that all service men should be retained in their own provinces. Thus officials from West Punjab, Sind

or East Bengal, whatever their community, should remain in Pakistan. Similarly service men belonging to the Indian provinces should serve India, regardless of whether they were Hindus or Muslims. My idea was that, if we could keep communal passion out of, at least, the services, a better atmosphere would be maintained in both the States. Administration would thus be clear from communal poison and the minorities in each State would feel a greater sense of security. I regret to say that my pleadings were in vain. It was decided that all service men would be given the right to opt for India or Pakistan. The result was that, almost without exception, Hindus and Sikhs opted for India and Muslims for Pakistan."²⁰

Maulana Azad also wrote that Lord Mountbatton had given an understanding in the following words, "at least on this one question I give you complete assurance. I shall see to it that there is no bloodshed and riots. I am a soldier, not a civilian. Once that partition is accepted in principle, I shall issue orders to see that there are no communal disturbances anywhere in the country. If there would be the slightest agitation, I shall adopt the sternest measures to nip the trouble in bud. I shall not use *only* the Armed Police, I will order the Army and the Air Force to act and would use tanks and aeroplanes to suppress anybody who wants to create trouble."²¹

How illusory was this pious wish of Lord Mountbatton, is established by the tragic and painful events that preceded and succeeded partition. More than two million Sikhs and many million others were either on the move in August, 1947, trekking all the way from their ancestral homes, victims of all the inclemencies of the weather and the cruelties of the hostile population in their passage in the hope and expectation of safety in the land of their adoption; or stranded in the refugee camps, bewailing the day when Nehru and Patel, Baldev Singh and a host of other leaders were participating in the jubilation of gaining freedom. Such leaders and their henchmen and stooges were justified for, hereafter, they would be free to unify and build the India of their dreams—a Hindu India, at the cost of the minorities. But it was a tragic moment for those, who were displaced and uprooted, who had been forced

to leave their hearths and homes and their motherland—to retain their honour and their faith and religion. For the Sikhs, however, it was the darkest hour preceding the Dawn—Dawn of the creation of their Homeland in an area, though small, where they were about to secure majority in accordance with the democratic principles of the day, with a language, culture, tradition and history of their own. Hereafter they would have a Homeland, with the freedom to develop in their own way, but only if they could maintain enough unity and strength to face the hostile forces.

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3. "Stern Reckoning" by G.D. Khosla, p. 112.
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POST-PARTITION PERIOD AND THE SIKHS

VI

Post-partition Punjab, known then as East Punjab, found itself in extreme turmoil for quite some time because of the movements of the millions from either side by all possible conveyances ; and when it stabilised, the State faced one of the most gigantic problems that had ever confronted any State in world history. Nearly four million displaced persons from West Pakistan had found their way to East Punjab, and were stranded in refugee camps, urban areas, hamlets and houses in towns and villages, in most insanitary conditions. They created a massive problem for the State authorities who had to settle them somehow and somewhere. The irony of the situation was that the other 7 lakhs that moved to Delhi and Uttar Pradesh were accorded most callous treatment. There is no doubt that the migration of refugees to Delhi did create problems for that State also, including the problem of law and order, but it must be admitted that the Delhi Administration was most unsympathetic to the refugees. In fact, the Uttar Pradesh Government even issued orders stopping the entry of refugees into that State. All this had a very sad impact on the refugee population. By the time, conditions stabilised, migration of the displaced persons to the districts of Punjab, with the evacuation of the Muslim population, brought the statistics of population in the different districts in accordance with the census of 1951 as under :—

PUNJABI SUBA

District	Population	Hindus		Sikhs		Others	
		No.	per cent	No.	per cent	No.	per cent
<i>(A) Punjabi Speaking Region</i>							
Hoshiarpur	10,86,224	7,94,688	73.2	2,84,320	26.2	7216	.6
Jullundur	10,08,766	4,29,747	42.6	5,78,387	56.5	9532	.9
Ludhiana	8,06,788	3,11,389	37.3	4,97,419	61.7	7962	1.0
Ferozepore	13,08,237	5,05,937	38.7	7,80,024	59.6	22276	1.7
Amritsar	12,70,220	3,51,710	27.7	8,97,309	70.6	21301	1.7
Gurdaspur	7,61,782	3,46,844	45.5	3,54,681	46.6	60217	7.9
Patiala	5,24,269	2,73,087	52.1	2,46,953	47.1	4229	.8
Barnala	5,36,728	1,12,635	20.0	3,80,811	70.9	43282	8.0
Bhatinda	6,66,908	1,44,305	21.7	5,21,054	78.1	1459	.2
Kapurthala	2,95,071	1,04,679	35.5	1,87,568	63.6	2824	1.1
Fatehgarh Sahib	2,37,397	80,141	33.7	1,54,714	65.2	2542	.9
Sangrur	6,42,934	4,20,218	65.4	2,15,023	33.4	7693	1.2
Total	91,45,316	38,65,429	42.3	50,89,354	55.6	1,90,533	1.2

POST-PARTITION PERIOD AND THE SIKHS

District	Population	Hindus No.	per cent	Sikhs No.	per cent	Others No.	per cent
(B) Hindi Speaking Region							
Simla	46,150	37,287	80.8	7,417	16.1	1,446	3.1
Kangra	9,26,477	8,98,564	97.0	18,401	2.1	9,512	1.0
Hissar	10,45,645	9,54,714	91.3	80,394	7.7	10,537	1.0
Rohtak	11,22,046	1,15,046	98.5	7,907	0.7	16,735	17.3
Karnal	10,79,379	9,74,959	90.3	94,658	24.6	2,980	3.2
Mohindergarh	4,43,379	4,28,347	98.9	2,615	0.6	2,112	0.5
Kohistan	1,47,403	1,30,937	88.8	13,206	9.0	3,260	2.2
Total	67,21,572	60,15,350	89.5	4,65,164	6.9	2,41,058	3.6
Grand total	1,53,66,888	98,80,779	62.3	55,54,518	35.0	4,31,591	2.7

The Hindu population in the Punjab came to be 62.3, giving them absolute majority and the Sikh population in the then entire Punjab came to be 35.0, again a minority in the new set-up. But, at the same time, it began to be felt that in an area comprising the 12 districts which later came to be known as the Punjabi Speaking Region, a contiguous area of nearly 50,000 square miles had a majority of Sikh population.

The consequences of the partition in the new province of East Punjab were three ; firstly, there was the problem of the rehabilitation of the refugee population that had settled down in the Punjab ; secondly, the necessity of socio-economic and cultural integration of this population into the body politic of the Punjab ; thirdly, the new province found itself overnight a border State, beset with problems and with a neighbouring sovereign and strong State not favourably inclined towards it.

The first problem was purely administrative. It went into safe hands when Tarlok Singh became the Director General of Rehabilitation and took over the problem of settling the refugees. It was his devotion to duty, his indefatigable energy, intense study of the problem and the needs of the refugees, his control over the resources of the newly created State and the evacuee properties that enabled a tolerable, though not a very satisfactory settlement of the refugees in the State. Efforts were made to integrate the refugee population in the body politic of the new State by the creation of a new Legislative Assembly, transplanting the displaced M.L.As. from the West Punjab into the East Punjab Assembly. It will be recalled that the Akali Dal had contested the 1946 elections against the Congress, and had succeeded in securing 23 out of 33 seats reserved for the Sikhs. The Congress party had won 50 general seats, including the 10 Sikh seats. The newly created legislature comprised 87 members in which 23 were the Akali members. The Congress was divided into two groups then known as the Satyapal Group and the Bhargava Group, which were equally divided, and under these circumstances, the balance lay with the Akali members.

The political implications of the partition were far-reaching inasmuch as, overnight, the Hindus of the newly created

there. At that time Giani Kartar Singh was the President also of the Shiromani Akali Dal. Master Tara Singh later said that this move was with the view to see how far the Akali M.L.As. could serve the interests of the community and the country. I recollect that Giani Kartar Singh, who was then staying with me at Jullundur, announced one evening in a press conference that the Sikhs would not demand any communal electorate, and would now throw their weight with the Congress and give it complete support, if they were offered safeguards.

It surprised me that the President of the Akali Dal should give up unilaterally a right which the community had enjoyed for so long. This somersault and sacrifice of Sikh interests could hardly surprise those who came to know of Giani Kartar Singh's moves in politics later. What motivated him to make such announcement at that stage must be known to him alone. But the irony of the situation was that this had no effect on the Hindu leadership. It was for this reason that one of the very sober and sound members of the Assembly, Jagjit Singh Mann, who could not be dubbed to be a communalist, while speaking in the Assembly said :

"It is the communal tension we have got as legacy from the British. After the partition of Punjab, this evil has become all the more aggressive. I think it is the main part of tension. The Hindu officials have been recruited on communal lines, and now they find it hard to shake off the label. There is no change in their mentality.... And all the Government officials from the highest to the lowest have communal mentality. So long as this mentality is not changed, the relations between the communities cannot be improved." Another speaker, S. Gurbachan Singh Bajwa, who later became the Finance Minister in the Congress Cabinet complained of the attitude of the Hindu officials in the same manner, saying: "Prevalance of communalism in services is having serious repercussions on the public life in the province.... If we want to avoid a repetition of the past tragedy, the confidence of the minority communities will have to be won by the majority community..." He continued, "It was the reluctance of the majority community (to win over the confidence of the

minority) which has brought about the partition; and I am afraid if the majority community again behaved in this manner, the results would again be disastrous. The minority will have to face the situation."¹ Jathedar Udham Singh Nagoke, the then President of the S.G.P.C. and an old Congressman who had parted company with Master Tara Singh on the 'Quit India' movement and War Effort and courted arrest in 1942, also felt perturbed at the communal wave in the services and discriminatory treatment that was being accorded by the authorities to the Sikh personnel. He complained in a memorial, "There had been a great injustice to the Sikhs in the services. Hindus in the Gazetted posts form 71.5 to 96% in P.W.D, Electricity, Excise and Taxation and Food and Civil Supplies Department. It was also alleged that Hindu officers in the Departments (a) are so intoxicated with power which is based on absolute majority that in the day-to-day official dealings they are spreading the venom of communalism, hatred and persecution to the extent of forcing the Sikh employees to leave the departments". He further complained that such an objective was being achieved by different methods for instance (i) refusing leave to the Sikh employees (ii) discriminatory treatment for producing medical certificates for sick leave, (iii) overburdening the Sikh employees, (iv) no arrangement for their residential accommodation (v) recording bad annual reports."² The charges were also brought that the Punjab University Senate and Education Department were completely dominated by the Hindus, who had a communal outlook and acted accordingly. With a view to ensure adequate Sikh representation in the services the S.G.P.C. recommended that "two separate lists of seniority for Hindus and Sikhs be introduced."³

The few facts given above are indicative of the wave of communalism that spread in the post-partition Punjab amongst the Hindus in official and political life. Possibly this was the legacy of the pre-partition Punjab, when the Hindus were in a minority of 27% as against 57% Muslims, and when Hindus and Sikhs had to resort to a common joint front to resist the communal aggressiveness of the Muslim League. Another

factor that contributed to the intensification of the defensive outlook in the leadership of the minority was the aggressive and proselytizing impact of the Arya Samaj Movement in the Punjab. This movement had found in Punjab a very fertile ground for its growth and spread. In fact, Punjab was the stronghold of the Arya Samaj Movement, with a huge number of schools and colleges stretching throughout the State which were the breeding ground of aggressive revivalism of *Hinduism*. This movement was initially sponsored by Swami Daya Nand as a reformist Movement to relieve Hinduism of its priesthood, idolatory and other rituals and customs that had crept in, and it laid emphasis on Vedantism. But it became very aggressive towards Islam and the Christianity, that found converts in lower strata of the Hindu society. The Arya Samaj Movement introduced in Punjab certain aggressive features under the name and designation of 'Shudhi' and 'Sangbthan' which had its reaction in the Muslims also, who started a counter movement of Tabligh and Tanzim in the thirties of this century. This movement had spread the worst of communalism in the Hindu mind and to a very large extent this was the legacy inherited by the post-partition Punjab. The Arya Samaj Movement did not spare the Sikhs. It made a deliberate and advised move to absorb them into Hindu society. This gave birth to the Singh Sabha Movement as discussed earlier. The Sikhs had become convinced that the Arya Samaj Movement and its aggressive communalism was meant to eliminate their entity and thus engendered a feeling of antipathy against the Arya Samajists. The combined effect of the currents in the United Punjab was that the Arya Samaj leadership, which within its ambit comprised the Hindu population of the United Punjab, was saturated with communalism of the worst type. The moment this leadership found itself in a dominating majority in the post-partition Punjab, it was elated at the position it had attained. Their leadership then began to feel that, with the entire Hindu India behind it, the only way to create a Nation, united and strong, in the country was to eliminate minority problem by absorption of minorities like the Sikhs into Hindu society. This concept and

outlook was picked up by the Arya Samaj press which had been very strong from the very outset, and which swayed the Hindu mind at that time. In fact, in the creation of this communal atmosphere the Arya Samaj press had played a dominant role. It spearheaded the movement in the post-partition Punjab which held that it was no longer necessary for the Sikhs to remain a separate entity, as a religion or as 'Panth'. The writings of those days and the speeches from the platform dilated on the objective that Guru Gobind Singh had created the Khalsa for the protection of Hindu society against Moghal aggression. Now that the problem had been solved by the partition of the country and the eviction of the Muslims, the existence of the 'Khalsa' as such was not necessary, and the Sikhs should come back to the Hindu society and be absorbed by it. These factors intensified communal feelings.

This had a natural reaction on the Sikhs. They had been in minority, certainly, in Punjab but it had been a dynamic, virile, valiant and strong minority, which had played an effective role in its resistance to the communal activities of either community, Hindus or Muslims. It had allied itself with the Hindu minority in the political field finding it also a victim of Muslim communalism, and gave it full support. The Sikhs all this while had a feeling that they were a distinct entity with a different religion, a separate social order, and a history of their own, separate traditions, a brilliant background and their own heroes in history. The Sikh leadership certainly felt much frustrated in the post-partition Punjab, having found the Sikhs again in minority faced with communal virus and venom saturating the mind of the Hindu leadership which had overnight become a majority by the partition, and which started exhibiting unhealthy communal outlook in the day-to-day working in the Punjab. The Sikhs felt frustrated too that they were not being given the treatment they expected and were not being accorded those safeguards which had been promised to them in the pre-partition Punjab by the Congress. They remembered the promises which the Congress leadership had given to them, recalled the speech of Nehru, who had said, as

late as 4th April, 1946, "If the Sikhs desire to function in such a unit (*autonomous unit*), I shall like them to have a semi-autonomous unit within the province so that they may have a sense of freedom." They felt insulted by the aggressive communalism of the Arya Samaj majority in the post-partition Punjab, where they found themselves again being suppressed and strangled by the communal leadership of the Hindu majority. They felt that they were entitled to an effective role in partitioned Punjab for two reasons; firstly, their sacrifices and sufferings as a result of the communal riots in Rawalpindi in March 1947, and their massacre in the Muslim majority districts had been the reason that had led to the partition of the Punjab saving East Punjab to India; secondly, they had been mainly responsible for the defence of the East Punjab, and were instrumental in the eviction and consequent migration of the Muslim population from the province and as such, by all canons of fairness, equity and justice, they were entitled to an effective role in the policy-making and administration of East Punjab. They further averred and argued that they had given unstinted and unconditional support in the post-partition Punjab by joining the Congress with the objective of building up a new Punjab, economically and socially strong. It was very unfortunate that at that time the Sikhs had not an effective press of their own, to voice their feelings and sentiments, yet they did their best by representations and speeches. All the 23 Akali members had joined the Congress and started giving complete support to the Bhargava Ministry. This was with the approval of Master Tara Singh though he kept a mental reservation, that in case they did not create climate and conditions, where Sikhs would be able to play an equal and effective part with the Hindus, he would ask them to withdraw.

It will be interesting and illuminating to learn how the Constituent Assembly had tried to tackle the minority problem, and how, with the passing of time, it changed its stand to the detriment of the minorities, as a result of Hindu dominance and Hindu communalism. The Constituent Assembly had considered the problem of political safeguards

for the minorities in August, 1947, after the partition of the country and had come to the following decisions :

“(i) That the election to the Central and Provincial legislatures will be held on the basis of joint electorate with a reservation of seats for certain specific minorities in the provinces. The reservation will be for ten years, at the end of which the position will be reconsidered. There shall be no weightage, but the members of the minority community for whom seats are reserved shall have the right to contest general seats ;

(ii) That there shall be no statutory reservation of seats for the minorities in the Cabinet, but a convention on the lines of paragraph 7 of the instruments of instructions issued by the Governor under Government of India Act 1935 shall be provided in a schedule to the constitution ;

(iii) That in all the All-India and provincial services the claims of minorities shall be kept in view in recruiting the applicants to these services consistent with the consideration of efficiency and administration ; and

(iv) That to ensure protection to the minority rights, officers shall be appointed by the President at the Centre and the Governors in the provinces to report to the Union and Provincial Legislatures respectively about the working of the safeguards.”

The Constituent Assembly had decided to postpone the consideration of the whole question of minority rights due to the tremendous upheaval on both sides of the border in East Punjab and West Bengal consequent upon the partition of the country and migratory flow by the people from both sides. It was openly said then that the partition had induced a feeling in the high-ups to have a sort of unitary Government which induced the Congress leadership to postpone the matter for reconsideration.

Accordingly, the Advisory Committee on the Minority and Fundamental rights in the meeting held in February, 1948 appointed a Sub-committee comprising Sardar Patel as Chairman and Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Ambedkar and K. M. Munshi as members to report on certain minorities problems left for consideration by the Consti-

tuent Assembly in August, 1947, which affected East Punjab and West Bengal. The obvious change in the trend of thinking of the Congress leaders in regard to these safeguards necessary for the minorities created a stir and commotion among the leaders of the minorities. This change spread to the States, and for this reason the East Punjab administration headed by Dr. Bhargava issued a circular in June, 1948, laying down the Education policy of the State Government in regard to the medium of instruction in the Educational Institutions. The circular ran as follows :

"The Government of East Punjab have decided that the medium of instruction in the schools in the East Punjab will be the mother tongue of the pupil.

The script to be used will either be the Devanagiri or Gurmukhi in the last two classes.

The school which adopts the Devanagiri script in the first two classes will have to use the teaching of Gurmukhi script as additional script from this class onwards and vice versa.

These scripts shall be introduced in all schools in 1st and 2nd classes immediately or with effect from the new academic year as convenient in place of Urdu and the teachers should be instructed to learn Hindi and Punjabi adequately before the beginning of the new term."

A few days earlier, i.e., on the 1st of June, 1948, Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava, the then Premier of the East Punjab, speaking at Jullundur had admitted that Punjabi was admittedly the mother tongue of the people of the East Punjab. Therefore, the announcement of the East Punjab Government declaring both Hindi and Punjabi to be the medium of instruction was a rude shock to the Sikhs. This was contrary to the policy that was being formulated on an All-India basis in those days about which an announcement was made on the 14th August, 1948. The resolution of the Government of India published in the Gazette of India dated August 14, 1948 stated :

"No. D. 3791/48—D.1.

The principle that a child should be instructed in the early stage of his education through the medium of his mother tongue has been accepted by the Government. All educationalists

condemn the separate electorate system. But in the composite State that India undoubtedly is, the right to choose one's own representative is the most effective and prized safeguard for a minority. Separate electorates are only the age-old democratic maxim. What touches us must be approved by us in practice. The apprehensions felt about them are chimerical. On the other hand, they are sine qua non of the Sikh satisfaction, and would promote confidence and concord between the communities by eliminating causes and chances of friction. It would be open to the majority party and other political parties to set up other candidates to contest and win Sikh seats by winning the confidence and support of the Sikhs. The Sikhs are insistent on it, because the aggressive communal mentality, brought into play particularly during the last 10 months by the majority community, has created an apprehension in their minds that the joint electorate system may be exploited to kill their entity. Besides, there is every possibility of Hindu-Sikh conflict if elections were held under the joint electorate system. To add to this, it is in the fitness of things that separate electorate for the Sikhs be retained in the present East Punjab at least for 10 years, when conditions may be reviewed."

This resolution is a landmark in the development of the attitude of the Sikhs to the mentality of the Arya Samaj sections of the Punjab at that time. It will be recalled that Giani Kartar Singh had unilaterally made a declaration as far back as October, 1947, that the Sikhs were ready to give up separate electorate, and had confidence in the Congress. How things had changed due to the communal aggressiveness of the Hindu majority, is obvious from the wording of the above resolution. The post-partition period was the most appropriate time, when the entire effort and energies of the Indian leadership, professing and claiming to be secular and national, should have been concentrated on bringing about the integration of the different classes and communities in the one sweeping stream of Nationhood, making them forget that there was any divergence or diverseness of interest and objective. Emotional integration can only succeed the policies and programmes in the political and social field by the leadership, and not precede

it. The policies and programmes of the leadership must inspire the confidence in the different classes and creeds, that their interests and objectives are common with the general people. They should be made to feel equal citizens with equal rights and equal privileges, before they could be made to think emotionally, and in spirit, as one with the rest. More so in regard to the Sikhs, who felt that they had suffered for the sake of the country, and had made untold sacrifices for its cause. The only golden opportunity was lost. The thinking of the Hindu leadership did not change. Their policies and programmes remained the same, to absorb all classes and communities in the vast social order of Hinduism, and no measures were taken to satisfy the Sikhs politically. Their legitimate claims were ridiculed. Their aspirations were laughed at. Their legitimate demands were curbed and suppressed. Their leaders were thrown into jail and this happened in free India. They were made to feel that they were inferior citizens and must play to the tune of the Rulers. Stress was laid on fundamental rights but only on paper, and otherwise they were discriminated against. Emphasis was laid on the emotional integration which was shouted from the housetops but without creating ground for it. Stooges were elected and honoured. These were the policies that widened the gulf between the majority and the minorities.

The tense communal situation in the Punjab due to the opposition of the Hindu leadership to the grant of any safeguard to the Sikhs, but the feasibility of a formula or agreement on the issues involved and the views of the East Punjab Assembly as such to be communicated to the Constituent Assembly, persuaded the East Punjab Ministry to appoint a Minority Committee, which was done by a unanimous vote of the House in early November, 1948.

The formation of the Minority Committee and the conditions and circumstances prevalent caused all the Sikh members of the Assembly to draw up a charter of demands on the 15th November, 1948, asking for the following safeguards. The only exception was one Sikh, Partap Singh Kairon, later the favourite of Nehru, who did not sign this charter. The demands

were divided into 13 heads and amongst them the following were important :—

1. Representation to be given to the Sikhs on the basis of 1941 census without excluding Sikhs who had migrated to other provinces.
2. They should be given 5 per cent representation in the Central Cabinet.
3. Sikhs should have one Minister and one Deputy Minister in the Central Cabinet.
4. The post of Governor and premier of the province should alternatively go to a Hindu or a Sikh.
5. 50 per cent representation in the Provincial Cabinet should be given to the Sikhs.
6. Gurgaon district and Loharu State should be separated from the East Punjab.
7. 40 per cent of the services be reserved for the Sikhs.
8. If the above demands were rejected the Sikhs should be allowed to form a New Province of 7 districts, i.e. Hoshiarpur, Jullundur, Ludhiana, Ferozepore, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Ambala.

It may also be mentioned here that by that time the Sikh princely States had been integrated into Patiala and East Punjab States Union having a population of nearly 30 lakhs where the Sikhs claimed 53% and as such had an effective role.

The enumeration of the above demands shows that at the time, the Sikh community only wanted protection and safeguards, and was not keen to have a Punjabi Suba even on the basis of language. No doubt, it was stated in the demand of the legislators that, failing acceptance of these safeguards, a province of 7 districts be created, conveying thereby that a majority area for the Sikhs was intended to be demarcated, yet this should be read in the context of the safeguard claims of the minority, which should not have been overlooked. This, however, began to be dubbed as a demand for 'Sikhistan' by the Arya Samaj Press; and these 13 demands began to be compared with the 14 demands of the Muslim League resolved in its conference on the 13th June, 1927, then rejected by the Congress which ultimately terminated in the creation of

Pakistan in 1947, 20 years later. This depiction of the demand for safeguards as being a demand of 'Sikhistan' was unfortunate, as it had been unfortunate that the same press had started calling the Lahore Resolution of the Muslim League of 1940 as Pakistan Resolution when the Muslim League had not claimed it as such.

The meeting of the Minority Committee held its sitting at Ambala and deliberated over the matter. The discussions centred around the question as to whether weightage or any reservation should be given to any community, and in the course of such deliberations, the 13 demands of the Sikh Legislators came for consideration. The Minority Committee could not come to any decision and appointed a Sub-committee of 10 members to evolve some kind of formula or agreement on all communal questions in East Punjab. This Sub-committee consisted of five Hindus and five Sikhs namely, Bhim Sen Sachhar, Ch. Lehr Singh, B.L. Chanan, Suraj Mal and Smt. Shanno Devi; the Sikh members of the Sub-committee were Swaran Singh, Giani Kartar Singh, Ujjal Singh, Ishar Singh Mujhel and Bachan Singh. This committee held its sitting and its general discussions, which though secret, were reported to be that there was no possibility of any decision as the Hindu point of view was that if India was to be a 'secular' State there was no question of any kind of communalism being given any quarter. Their chief point was that the future constitution of India would provide full and free citizenship rights to every individual to whatever religion he might belong. Therefore, it was not necessary even to have a discussion of the kind, to give safeguards to the Sikh community. The Sikh point of view, however, was on the lines of their 13 demands, and the emphasis was on the fact that the communal atmosphere generated by the Hindu attitude during the one year of the post-partition period necessitated some safeguards. Even in this Minority Sub-committee, no demand of the creation of the linguistic State was made as such, though it was pressed to the extent only that the Gurgaon district and the State of Loharu be separated from the Punjab. The failure of the Committee, or for that matter of the Sub-committee appointed for the purpose,

showed the way things were going. The communal atmosphere in the State was being intensified, and even the "Tribune", founded by a Sikh but controlled by Hindu trustees of the Arya Samaj section, and a protagonist of Hindu point of view, wrote in its publication of 10th November, 1948:

"It is useless to pretend that what is described as communal poison has suddenly developed with the setting up of the 'Minority Committee'. Let us be honest and admit that it has been there and that it has been growing. Its presence and its growth has impeded rehabilitation. Displaced persons are not settling down for fear that they may again be displaced. Communal feeling has not only retarded rehabilitation, it has given it a false accentuation. The two communities that have come across the border are thinking and acting in terms of competitive rather than cooperative rehabilitation. They stand in fear of each other and they are feared by the local population. These are the facts of the situation and unless we recognise them and face them squarely, we shall not find a solution. We have a situation which cannot be allowed to deteriorate; for deterioration must mean irrevocable disintegration." On an earlier occasion this paper wrote:

"Within the province itself there are elements which would effect a further division ostensibly on linguistic grounds but actually in perpetuation of the pernicious doctrine of religious exclusiveness, the pursuit of which will plunge the Punjab in disaster even greater than the one it has experienced. Our knowledge and experience and every instinct within us cries against the certain destruction towards which the province is heading. Only the foolhardy will remain at the helm without change in the course. It was very unfortunate that independent and isolated views expressed at that time by individuals, to give Punjabi a state level in certain areas, was being dubbed as communalism on the part of the Sikhs, who in fact stressed that there was to be no consideration of percentages and nor was it indeed, that such views should have been given a communal colour by the Hindu leadership and Hindu press which had an unfortunate impact on the Sikhs. It should be noted that by the end of 1949 there was no organised

demand as such for the creation of a linguistic State, though views to that effect were being expressed by individuals including Master Tara Singh. Emphasis was, however, being laid on due safeguards in the Constitution or to adopt conventions to give the Sikhs an effective position in the body politic of the State and the country. This demand even was being stoutly opposed by the Hindu leadership which was obvious from the fact that the Minority Committee, after a few adjournments and meetings, was not able to evolve any formula. Sardar Patel of course as Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Minority Rights turned down all these demands.

Again the "Tribune" on the 26th November, 1948, wrote: "The whole conception of Sikh political interest is fundamentally at variance with the secular nature of the State. Under the new political set-up, which is shortly coming into existence, political parties will have completely cut themselves on economic lines. Communal weightage and reservations are devices to distort the growth of a healthy and natural political development." Considering the communal wave that permeated the Hindu leadership during the post-partition period in the Punjab, the Sikhs felt that statutory safeguards were necessary for the protection of their religion and culture and also of their language, which was being disowned at that time by the Hindu intelligentsia. It was felt that, in the absence of statutory safeguards, they would not have that position in the body politic to which they were entitled. The failure of the Minority Committee to evolve a formula of any kind naturally created the feeling that justice was not being given to the Sikhs. Such was the atmosphere when Master Tara Singh commented on November 15, 1948, while discussing the Hindu-Sikh tension then prevalent, "It is a very ominous campaign started against the Sikhs by the leaders of the East Punjab and fanned by the Hindu press. The writing of some papers is distinctly hostile. Such propaganda cannot be taken lying down, and I fear that it is only fanning the fire of communal hatred. These papers provide me with stronger arguments against the Hindus as they assert that under no circumstances can the Hindu accept Sikh domination. In

the provincial sphere I must make it plain that I cannot accept Hindu domination. There is a section of the Punjab Hindus which is at present leading anti-Sikh agitation, I have stated unequivocally on numerous occasions in the past and repeat it now, that I wish to retain the entity of the Khalsa Panth, and shall resist every effort to absorb the Sikhs into the Hindu community. The remedy for the state of mutual suspicion lies in the fact that means should be found so that neither community remains under the other's domination. It should be a sort of an equal partnership. Trust begets trust and then alone can there be peace, better understanding and harmony."⁴ Continuing his statement he said, "We have not lost our faith in the non-Punjabi Hindus and we have expressed our confidence in the Centre. Why should Punjab Hindus lose confidence in the Sikhs? The Central Government will naturally be dominated by the Hindus and there we want only 5% representation in the face of our about 2% population. We want equality in the East Punjab alone and not in the Central Government, where we want an honourable status and position. I want only such safeguards as can give us an honourable status." He further expressed his surprise that the Hindus of Punjab should adopt anti-Sikh attitude when, "I have not so far met a single non-Punjabi Hindu who is anti-Sikh."⁵ This statement is an ample proof of the fact that up to the end of 1948 and even much later, there was no question of having a linguistic State, except statutory safeguards for the protection of Sikh interests and rights.

The opposition to Punjabi, however, and to its use in educational institutions or otherwise in official matters was intensified by the Hindus. Punjabi had been the only one of the 14 languages in India that had suffered terribly at the hands of both communities, Muslims as well as Hindus. It was the language of the entire population of the United Punjab. It was not a fight for communal rights and privileges that prevailed in the pre-partition Punjab. In fact, it was the language issue on which the people of the Punjab were split, with different loyalties. The Muslims were fighting the Hindus to secure a status for Urdu. The Hindus were refusing to con-

cede any point to Urdu or allow its adoption in the legislature, in the university, or in the education department. The Muslims were boosting up Urdu, while the Hindus were trying to push forward Hindi. Meanwhile Punjabi, the actual language of the province, figured *no-where* in the picture and was completely disregarded. No one owned it except the Sikhs. It was in this atmosphere, in the post-partition Punjab, that Hindus continued supporting Hindi, while the Sikhs tried to put forward the demand for the use of Punjabi. It met with ridicule at the hands of the Hindu leadership and the Hindu press. An illustration of this was that the Jullundur Municipal Committee passed resolution No. 88 of February, 1948, providing that the basis of institution at the primary stage in the educational institutions maintained by the Jullundur Municipality should be Hindi, despite the fact that the Sikhs were in majority in the district.

Thus communal tension took a serious turn. The feelings of the Sikhs ran so high on the treatment accorded to Punjabi; that in order to voice Sikh feelings the Working Committee of the *Shiromani Akali Dal* announced holding of a conference at Delhi on the 20th February, 1949; but tremendous pressure was put on the members of the Working Committee by Baldev Singh, directly and through his friends to have this conference postponed. It seemed that Patel was bent upon cowing down the Sikhs, as he had done in the case of the Rulers and others. The conference only intended to voice the Sikhs' grievances and demands particularly at a time when the constitution was in the making. There was nothing subversive or secret about the conference. It was the only democratic way that such things could be done. Yet the manner in which Baldev Singh was acting showed that he wanted to avoid a crisis which he felt would be imminent if such a conference were held. A meeting of the Working Committee was called again for the 10th February, 1949, to reconsider the matter in the light of the messages that had been sent by Baldev Singh. The *Akali Dal*, however, could not postpone the gathering without loss of prestige despite intercession and efforts of Gian Kartar Singh, who was then a Minister in the Punjab Cabinet, and who too

was equally keen to avoid a crisis. The members of the Working Committee knew it full well, in the light of rumours that a crisis was coming, but the interests of the community demanded that they should go ahead with the conference, whatever its results. They, however, decided in their meeting on 10th February 1949, that instead of a Political Conference it would be a Shabidi Dewan, held on the premises of the Gurdwara Riqab Ganj Sahib at New Delhi. This should have been considered a happy compromise, and Sardar Patel should not have taken any drastic steps but he persisted. He got Master Tara Singh arrested, while he was on his way to Delhi, at Narela Railway Station, and also a few members of the Working Committee. The Shabidi Dewan was held on the 20th February, 1949, as scheduled and some friends and I addressed it giving reasons for holding it despite the ban. Explaining that we were entitled to voice our demands, and that the arrest of Master Tara Singh was totally unjustified and unwarranted, I warned the authorities that by this suppression of the Sikhs, they were only sowing the seeds of sectarianism, and consequently, of a Sikh State which might emerge if such a policy were followed. After the dispersal of the Dewan, I called on Baldev Singh and informed him of the circumstances explaining why it was essential that such a Dewan be held. I told him that it was a religious Dewan where, of course, we could discuss politics. At the time he felt and told me that the Centre might not take any steps to arrest those who had addressed the conference in breach of Section 144, Cr.P.C. that had been clamped on Delhi, but when I told him that I had heard of the warrants of arrest against me, he advised me that I should leave Delhi for Jullundur. He seemed to have no say in the decisions of the Centre. I felt that he wanted to use his influence to avert the crisis. He, however, failed and my friends and I and all those who addressed the Dewan were arrested thereafter. We, of course, refused bail and stood our trial, taking our stand on the plea that it was a religious Dewan and that there was no infringement or breach of Section 144, Cr.P.C. Our case was entrusted to a Sikh Magistrate. The same policy was adopted that the Britishers

used to follow in the pre-partition time. We were of course convicted as expected, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment after prolonged trial; during the trial also we remained in jail. Master Tara Singh had been taken to Banaras Jail.

The first arrest of such a prominent leader as Master Tara Singh in free India, not for any subversive activities but for voicing the views of a minority which felt aggrieved at the calculated ill-treatment being accorded to it, was a tragic irony. But a more bitter irony was that Baldev Singh, an erstwhile Akali, the nominee of the Akali Dal in the Central Cabinet, the beneficiary of Sikander-Baldev Singh Pact in support of which the community had put in such a stiff struggle, facing the Punjab Hindus and the Congress, should have let down Master Tara Singh to please his Congress masters. Baldev Singh, thus set an example in the higher circles of the Sikhs to play the quisling to the Congress, and gain advantages and power. On February 23, 1949, Baldev Singh gave a statement to the Press, which is an interesting commentary on the events of the times. After condemning the holding of the Conference by the Akali Dal, he said, "Ever since March 1948, when I succeeded in persuading the members of the Panthic party in the East Punjab Legislature to join the Congress, we have cast in our lot with the National Organisation without any reservation whatsoever. It was a unanimous decision and Master Tara Singh was a party to it. Somehow, however, differences began to emerge, and Master Tara Singh began attacking the Government and indulging in bitter communal activities. His public utterances of late have become objectionable and wholly unconstructive. It is true that the mind of the Sikhs has been exercised over some of their constitutional problems, but it is equally true that our Government and leaders have been giving these problems their most anxious consideration and if there has been any delay, it is because of their innumerable preoccupations. The country is passing through difficult times internally and externally. The overall problems of security—economic and political—are mixed up with myriad questions that claim priority over everything else. Both personally, and through friends, I tried to impress upon Master Tara Singh

the need for circumspection and patience, and of the danger of inflaming the mass mind in the prevailing circumstances. Unfortunately I could not succeed with him. No one doubts his sincerity; but that he failed to realise his responsibilities towards the country and the community at this grave juncture is unfortunately, too true."

This statement emanating from Baldev Singh justifying the arrest of Master Tara Singh was a shock to the Sikh intelligentsia. Baldev Singh admitted in his statement that the minds of the Sikhs were exercised over some constitutional problems regarding the provision for safeguards, yet he tried to exonerate the Government from their lapses because of 'innumerable pre-occupations'. The constitution was in the making and there was no reason why the Government of India should not have come to a decision about the safeguards necessary for the community. By that time, most of the important clauses in the constitution, pertaining to the minorities had already been decided upon, and the Sikhs were certainly and justifiably perturbed over the Congress leadership's rejection of the main demands. It was then that the Shiromani Akali Dal decided to hold a Protest Day throughout the Punjab and in Delhi on the 2nd March, 1949. The arrest of Master Tara Singh and his colleagues of the Working Committee and entire Akali leadership, initiated some re-thinking of the policies and programmes by the Sikh leadership, as to their position in the future set-up of the country. This was a very sad turn in events, and proved to be a hurdle later in the emotional integration of the two communities. Conditions in Pepsu were equally bad. Events therein were taking a turn which agitated the minds of the Sikhs. It would be recalled that the East Punjab States had been integrated into one unit, and this integration had been inaugurated by Sardar Patel in May, 1948 with all good wishes for its future which he had called the 'Homeland of the Sikhs'. The question then related to the formation of an interim Ministry and the proposal was that there should be a Sikh Prime Minister for this integrated unit. This was stoutly opposed by the Hindu leadership. The component units of this Patiala and East Punjab States Union

were all Sikh States except Malerkotla State and it was in the fitness of things that the interim Government of such an area should be headed by a Sikh. The stiff opposition from Hindu quarters had a very unhappy impact on the Sikhs. Gian Singh was selected as Prime Minister of the caretaker Government, but this was bitterly criticised by Brish Bhan, the then President, Patiala and East Punjab States Union Congress Committee, who issued the following statement to the press on September 28, 1948. Amongst other things he said, "In the past when Patiala State had a Hindu and a Muslim gentleman as Prime Minister, the Akalis never raised a little finger to get a 'Panthik Premier'. Today when the Raj Pramukh, who is also the Commander-in-Chief of the Union forces, the caretaker Premier and Police Chief are all Sikhs, they have raised the bogie of the Panth being in danger. After all what is the game? Vested interests apprehend that there was a logical possibility of losing the privileged position, so they have staged this drama of Akali morcha to frighten the minorities and impress the powers that be.

"It is not for the first time that the Raj Pramukh stands behind the smoke-screen of 'parties have not come to an agreement' and does his own will. He never sent a popular representative to the Constituent Assembly, and his Private Secretary is the sole representative of Patiala there till today. He has used the same tactics again, and has got Sardar Gian Singh, a close relative of his, to head the Caretaker Government. Now he is on the offensive. He holds the stick firm to beat the Congress with. Composition of the Electoral College for filling the two vacant seats is his recent achievement."

Such scathing criticism from the then Chief of the National Congress Organisation in Pepsu, of the nomination of a Sikh as Prime Minister of a Sikh majority area seemed presumptuous and inappropriate when the entire administration had been subjected to changes to the detriment of the Sikhs. Describing the state of affairs prevalent at the time, Jathedar Pritam Singh Gojran, President of the Shiromani Akali Dal, Patiala in a pamphlet issued on the 26th August, 1948, gave figures from the composition of the services, establishing the discriminatory

treatment accorded to the Sikhs. The pamphlet under the caption, "Eye-Opener to the Patiala Union Sikhs" stated: "The Caretaker Government has been formed with a premier and one Adviser and a Chief Secretary. Out of these three persons comprising the Caretaker Government only one is a Sikh, Shri Gian Singh the Premier, and the other two, Sir Jail Lal (Adviser) and Mr. B.R. Patel (Chief Secretary), are outside Hindus. I have nothing to say against the personality of these gentlemen, or their competence, but I vehemently object to the suggestion that a competent Chief Secretary and an Adviser are not available." He continued, further "out of 5 Deputy Secretaries, only two are Sikhs. Out of 9 Under-Secretaries, only 4 are Sikhs. Out of 8 Assistant Secretaries, 3 are Sikhs. Now, by working out the percentage we can see that the Sikhs are given 33% in the Caretaker Government, 33% in the ad hoc committee for services; 20% in the Secretaries, 40% in the Deputy Secretaries; 44% in the Under-Secretaries; 37% in Assistant Secretaries. A special feature of the appointments is that Sikhs have not been thought competent to hold any post from the Secretary down to the Assistant Secretary in the Finance Department, and they have been similarly ignored in the Education Department. Another interesting thing to note is that there is no mention of the Agriculture, Excise, Civil Supplies, P.W.D., Public Health, Sanitation and Medical Departments, but the Industries and Commerce has been given one full department, as if the union is an industrial unit having nothing to do with agriculture. It seems that everything has been dictated by one absolutely ignorant of the conditions of this Union. If the Hindus were wanted in any Department, they have been brought from other departments and promoted from a lower cadre as.... Now every-thing is crystal clear and it needs no comment. Even the man in the street can see that a 70% population has been given only 30% in the Civil Services. This is the foretaste of Congress democracy in our Sikh State Union. The Sikhs of East Punjab are already having their share of the lesson in democracy."

Adverting to the attitude of the Hindus against the integra-

tion of the Sikh States and the creation of the Union, Jathedar Pritham Singh Gojran wrote in the said pamphlet, "then came the problem of the Union of the East Punjab States." Praja Mandal, the alleged scion of the omnipotent Congress, opposed tooth and nail the democratic movement started by the Shromani Riasti Akali Dal for the integration of East Punjab States, because they feared lest a slice of territory may be saved from the communal domination of the Hindus. But the Union came about despite their worst efforts. The formation of the Union was acclaimed with fervour by the Sikhs all over the country. The afflicted Sikhs wishfully looked for the nucleus of a homeland in such a Union, wherein they have a Sikh majority. It is not known under what misconception the State Ministry had agreed to form the Union, because afterwards every conceivable effort was made to side-track and circumscribe the Sikh majority. Perhaps in the dictionary of the Congress, constitutional words have different connotations when applied to the case of the Sikhs. In the case of the East Punjab, it is pleaded that the Sikhs cannot be given any weightage because it will be undemocratic to touch the Hindu majority there. But when the question of Sikh majority in the Patiala Union comes up, it is sermonised that ours is a secular State and that the question of giving to the majority its due share does not arise at all. If there is a question of linguistic provinces, then it is all too well in the case of Andhra, Tamil-land and Karnatic, etc., but when applied to the Punjab it becomes a communal question, which the Congress is determined not to countenance. Now the Sikhs should open their eyes, lest it should be too late. It is obvious even to a dunce that it is the considered policy of our present Government not to allow the Sikhs any effective voice in any area. All lessons in democracy and all sermons for shedding communalism, are meant for the Sikhs only, whereas the resurrection of the Tilak ceremony on the forehead of the Head of the Secular State and the recitation of Vedic Mantras on ceremonial occasions of the Secular State of India and the like is all too obvious 'Nationalism'. In their dictionary, the worst type of reactionary communalism of the overwhelming Hindu majority is 'Nationalism'."

It was the treatment accorded to the Sikhs during the two years after partition that drove the Akali leadership to again consider their future. It was then that in April, 1949 a large convention was called at Amritsar to which the Sikhs from all walks of life, politicians, teachers, businessmen, doctors, lawyers and other prominent people were invited. It was there that the arrest of Master Tara Singh and other Akali leaders was condemned and demand for the creation of a linguistic State for Punjabis based purely on linguistic basis was adopted. At that time Master Tara Singh was in jail. It was decided there that public opinion in the Sikhs be organised and channelised to the attainment of the above objective. The boundaries of such linguistic State for Punjabis were not defined. Those who hold the view, that Shiromani Akali Dal adopted a subtle move from the very outset to have a Sikh majority area for such a State stand contradicted from the later resolution adopted by Shiromani Akali Dal in this regard, and the area that was later defined to be the Punjabi Speaking area.

Another incident that sparked the controversy was the resolution by the Punjab University Senate on the 9th June, 1949, rejecting Punjabi as a medium of instruction, though at the time the Sikh members were even ready to accept Punjabi in Devanagari or Hindi script. This led to withdrawal and walk out by the Sikh members.

It was in such a political climate that the Report of the Minority Sub-committee of the Constituent Assembly came to be known. The relevant portions of this Report pertaining to the Sikhs are as under :

"3. The most important problem referred to us is the problem of the Sikhs. We have examined carefully the demand put forward on their behalf by different organisations and individuals. There are also suggestions that no special constitutional safeguards are necessary to the very forthright demands of the Shiromani Akali Dal.

The main demands are :

- (i) That the Sikhs should have the right to elect representatives to the legislatures through communal electorate ;
- (ii) That in the provincial legislature of East Punjab 50% of

all the seats, and in the Central Legislature 5% should be reserved for the Sikhs ;

(iii) That seats should be reserved for them in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi ;

(iv) That their scheduled castes should have the same *privileges as other scheduled castes* ; and

(v) That there should be statutory reservations of certain proportion in the army.'

It will be noticed that these reservations are a fundamental departure from the decision taken by the Assembly in respect of every other community including the scheduled castes.

"4. It seems scarcely necessary for us to say that in dealing with the problem we are sufficiently aware of the tragic sufferings, which the Sikh community suffered, both before and after the partition of the Punjab. The holocaust in Punjab has deprived them of many valuable lives and of great material wealth. Moreover, while in other respects, the Hindus suffered equally with the Sikhs, the special tragedy of the Sikhs was that they had also to *abandon many places, particularly sacred to their religion*. While we fully understand the emotional and physical strain to which they have been subjected, we are clear in our minds that the question for consideration must be settled on different grounds."

The findings of the Committee were :

"6. We have come to the conclusion that we cannot recommend either communal electorate or weightage in the legislature, which are the main demands of the Shiromani Akali Dal. *In the first place, they are not necessary for the well-being of the Sikhs themselves for the reasons stated above. Indeed, it seems that, under the system of joint electorate with reserved seats and with the right to contest additional seats, the Sikhs are likely to get greater representation than is strictly warranted on a population basis, which on the system of communal electorate their representation will be limited. The only way this representation could be increased beyond the population basis could be by weightage which means trenching compulsorily on what other communities legitimately regard as their right. In the second place, communal electorate and*

weightage are definitely retrograde from the point of view of the general interest of the country....."

"We recommend accordingly that no special provision should be provided for the Sikhs other than the general provisions already approved by the Assembly for certain other minorities and services in para 2."

The emphasis in this Report was that the Sikhs, because of their position, strength and drive in the Punjab, and having the right to fight the general seats besides those reserved for them on the population basis in the province as decided by the Constituent Assembly on 8th August, 1947, would be politically better off, and would surely get a greater and more effective representation, situated as they were, but the Sub-committee could hardly be unaware that its Chairman, Sardar Patel, was already, manoeuvring and managing the minorities members of the Advisory Committee on the Minorities and Fundamental Rights Committee to even give up even the poor protections already passed by the Constituent Assembly in August 1947. He had specially convened a meeting of this Advisory Committee after such manoeuvring for 11th May, 1949, where it was resolved, it was no longer necessary to have the safeguards for the minorities which had been passed by the Constituent Assembly in August 1947. And Sardar Patel made the committee recommend, in para No. 8 of the Report, the following :

"8. The Committee are fully alive to the fact, that a decision once reached should not be changed lightly. Conditions have, however, vastly changed since August, 1947 and the Committee are satisfied that the minorities themselves feel that in their own interests, no less than the interest of the country as a whole, that the statutory reservations for religious minorities should be abolished. The Committee accordingly recommend that the provisions of para 14 of the draft constitution should be amended in the light of the decision now taken."

How this Advisory Committee came to find that the feelings of the Sikh minority were as mentioned in the Report is incomprehensible, particularly when the demand of the Shiromani Akali

Dal stood as it did at that time, and when their President was in jail in Almora, and several hundred workers of the Akali Dal were either in jail in Delhi or other jails in the Punjab fighting for their demands. How did the Advisory Committee become aware of the feeling of the Muslim minority, when no general meeting of the Muslim members had been called to take their opinion, as conveyed by three of their members, Mr. Mohd. Ismail Sahib from Madras, Z.L. Laheri from U.P., and Sir Mohammad Said-Ullah Khan from Assam, in their representation. In the course of his speech on the consideration of these recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Minorities and Fundamental Rights etc., on May 25, 1949, Mohammad Ismail Sahib said, "Therefore, to take them as representing the views of the minorities, I think it is not fair. I know that there was canvassing for some time in connection with this question and now we have got the report before us." Mohammad Ismail Sahib was referring to the pressure that had been brought, to bear upon the minority members by Patel to give up the rights and the safeguards which the Constituent Assembly had resolved in August. Verily, Sardar Patel was playing the role of a great Hindu to eliminate the minorities and create the nation of his concept. The alleged consent of certain Muslim members was further exposed by Sir Mohd. Said Ullah Khan, ex-Chief Minister of Assam, when he said, while speaking on the motion, "I remember that on two previous occasions the Hon'ble Sardar propounded this dictum." He was referring to the elimination of the safeguards for the minorities and continued, "Unfortunately I find, Sir, that in the meeting on May 11, when there were 4 members of the Muslim community present, only one supported the resolution moved by my friend, Dr. H.C Mukerji, by speech, another opposed it *by vote* thus cancelling the support of one against the other, while our Hon'ble member in the Cabinet, I refer to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad took the rightful stand of being neutral and the other member Maulana Hafizur Rehman also remained neutral." Sir Mohammad Saidullah Khan pleaded that the view of the Muslim representative in the Constituent Assembly be taken, but no heed was pa

pleading.

How aptly Frank Anthony's remarks in the course of his speech apply to the minority members of the constituent Assembly, when he said, "There is a feeling particularly among the journalists from other countries, that today the minorities in India are being oppressed, that minority representatives either do not in fact represent the minorities or they are petrified by a sense of fear or regimentation and do not speak or express the fear which is in their hearts." Of course Frank Anthony denied that he suffered from such fears himself representing the Anglo Indians as he did and still does today.

The feelings of the Sikhs about the demands were too patent and obvious to justify a belief that they had agreed to give them up specially since Master Tara Singh was in jail, as already mentioned, and several hundred others behind prison bars. The Advisory Committee, however, in para 6 of their Report conceded a small item in their favour by recommending :

"6. The Committee accepted the unanimous proposal made by the Sikh representatives that the following classes in East Punjab namely Mazhbis, Ramdasias, Kabir Panthis, and Silligiris who suffer from the same disability as other members of the scheduled castes should be included in the scheduled castes so that they would get the benefit of representation given to the scheduled castes. Subject to this change and to the above mentioned resolution the Report of the Special Subcommittee appointed by the Advisory Committee was approved."

No amendment was moved by the Akali Dal representative, Hukam Singh, despite the fact that his colleagues and friends and his leader, Master Tara Singh, were in jail for demanding these statutory safeguards. On the other hand he supported the Report of the Advisory Committee withdrawing all concessions and rights of the minorities and applauded the generosity of the majority community to the minorities. He further expressed the gratitude of the community to the Government only complaining that the concession to the Sikh Scheduled castes should have been given earlier. He said

in his speech, "but despite this, the Sikhs are no less grateful for it. If it is a concession, they are grateful for it. If they are entitled to it, then too, they are grateful. They feel that one demand of theirs, about which they were very serious, has been met. They hope that other small things would also be considered favourably, so that they might feel satisfied and could walk shoulder to shoulder with other progressive forces to the chartered goal that was before us". Hukam Singh had been representing the Sikhs for two years in the Constituent Assembly, and knew well the 13 points in the charter of demands, and also the demand that other backward classes among the Sikhs also needed to be brought into the scheduled castes, and when the Akali Dal Working Committee Resolution stood about the specific demands formulated, he conveniently forgot all this.

I recollect that Hukam Singh came to see us while my friends and I were in Delhi jail on the 27th May, 1947. My notes in a diary written on that date tell me that he informed us that Sardar Patel manoeuvred the speeches of the Muslims in favour of eliminating the reservations. Maulana Azad was in favour of the reservations but simply of sheer frustration left for Kashmir for 2 months, and kept silent. Hukam Singh further told us that Giani Kartar Singh wanted him to speak against the reservations and support the stand of Sardar Patel. Dr. Rajendra Prasad too was keen that the Sikh member should support it. Therefore, he expressed gratitude for the small concession given. My diary notes convey that Sarup Singh was furious and all of us in jail were very indignant against Giani Kartar Singh. Perhaps Hukam Singh was using Giani Kartar Singh's name to cover his own game.

Of course, the amendment moved by Mohammad Ismail Sahib seeking the retention of the reservations was rejected and also another amendment by Z. A. Lahri, that there should be multiple constituencies which would ensure minority representation on the base of proportional representation was also rejected. Z. A. Lahri left India for good soon after.

The demands for statutory safeguards sponsored by the Sikh legislators and supported by the Shiromani Akali Dal

having been rejected summarily in the manner stated above, it was then that Master Tara Singh directed Hukam Singh from jail and his Akali friends brought pressure to bear upon him to make a representation that a commission be appointed for the demarcation of a linguistic state on the basis of Punjabi. In the text of his memorial he drew the attention of the President to the commitments of the Congress to the principle of the linguistic States, and its acceptance of the principle throughout its long course of resolution. He regretted that the Hindus were disowning Punjabi as their mother tongue and in this connection, he wrote: "It would be conceded that Punjabi is the language of the Punjab. It was in 1941, at the time of the census, that the Muslims insisted on owning only to Urdu as their mother tongue, whereas, the Hindus directed their coreligionists to own to Hindi. But now that the Muslims have left East Punjab, a section of the Hindus have refused to own to Punjabi as their mother tongue. This is the result of narrow mindedness and bigotry, which is not called for now. Who does not know that the Hindus who are opposing Punjabi today speak Punjabi in their houses but disown it publically.

The demand of a linguistic State in bilingual Punjab is not communal nor is it undemocratic. It surprises the Sikhs that Congressmen should oppose the creation of a linguistic State on the basis of Punjabi."

It will be appreciated that the demand for a linguistic State on the basis of the Punjabi language had not yet been made by the Akali Dal in the post-partition period for a long time, though emphasis was being laid for the recognition of Punjabi in Gurmukhi script as a regional language. Even this emphasis of the Sikh leaders and the Sikh press had evoked a bitter opposition from the Hindu public and leaders, particularly the Arya Samaj Press, which naturally astounded the Sikh leadership, who were shocked at the attitude of the majority community. This consequently had sparked off a language controversy giving it a continuity with the prepartition days, when there was so much emphasis on the adoption of Hindi as their language by the Hindus to counter the Muslim demand

for Urdu. The opposition to the use of the Punjabi language in the post-partition Punjab became so intense and offensive, that Punjabi in Gurmukhi script started being ridiculed in the vernacular papers owned by the Arya Samajists. The trend of events in the Punjab was arousing a serious reaction among the Sikhs, particularly in the light of the stand taken by the All-India Congress Committee on the issue of the linguistic States in the North. The draft committee of the Constituent Assembly had recommended, in December 1947, the appointment of a linguistic Commission to look into and report on the desirability or otherwise of the creation of any of the proposed provinces of Andhra, Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra. The Commission then commonly known as Dar Commission submitted its Report in December, 1948, and laid down certain tests which must be satisfied before the provinces were divided on linguistic basis. Those tests were as under:—

“(i) Geographical contiguity and absence of pockets and corridors ;

(ii) Financial sufficiency ;

(iii) Administrative convenience ;

(iv) Capacity for future development ; and

(v) A large measure of agreement within its borders and amongst the people speaking the same language in regard to its formation, care being taken that the new provinces should not be forced by a majority upon a substantial minority of the people speaking the same language.”

This Report had been discussed at the meeting of the Indian National Congress at its Jaipur Session in December, 1948. The matter was entrusted to a committee known as J.V.P. Committee which took its name from its members, who were Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel and Dr. Pattabhi Sitarammaya. This committee conceded that there was considerable public opinion in the country in favour of linguistic States, but advised such creations keeping in mind the primary consideration of the security, unity and economic prospects of India ; but when it came to Northern India it said :

“We are clearly of the opinion that no question of rectification of the boundaries in the provinces of Northern India

should be raised at the present moment whatever the merits of such a proposal might be." This report was adopted by the Congress Working Committee in April, 1949. This decision of the Congress Working Committee was considered to be a clear discrimination against the Punjabi-speaking population, particularly the Sikhs.

It was in October 1949, that the Punjab Government announced its decision to adopt a language formula in the educational institutions which came to be known as the Sachhar Formula, of which the following were the relevant parts :—

- "1. Hindi and Punjabi are both recognised as regional languages of the province.

2. Punjabi shall be the medium of instruction in Punjabi speaking area in all schools up to the matriculation stage, and Hindi shall be taught as a compulsory subject from the last class of the primary department, and up to the matriculation stage, but in the case of girls in girls' schools up to the middle class only. Likewise, Hindi shall be the medium of instruction in the Hindi-speaking area in all schools up to the matriculation stage and Punjabi shall be taught as a compulsory language from the last class of the primary department and up to the matriculation stage, but in the case of girls in girls' schools up to the middle classes only.

3. There will, however, be cases where the parent or guardian of a pupil may wish him/her to get instruction in Hindi in the Punjabi-speaking area and in Punjabi in the Hindi-speaking area on the ground that Hindi/Punjabi and not the regional language is his/her mother tongue. In such cases, without questioning that declaration of the parent or guardian, arrangements will be made for instruction in Hindi/Punjabi during the primary stage provided, there are not fewer than 40 pupils in the whole school wishing to be instructed in Hindi/Punjabi or 10 such pupils in the primary stage but the regional language shall be taught as a compulsory language from the fourth class in the case of boys' schools and 6th class in the case of girls' schools.

In the secondary stage also the medium of instruction for

pupils described in this paragraph will be Hindi/Punjabi if 1/3rd of the total number of pupils in a Government, Municipal or District Board School request for instruction in Hindi/Punjabi, Government will also require aided schools to arrange for instruction in Hindi/Punjabi if desired by 1/3rd of pupils, provided that there are no adequate facilities for instruction in Hindi/Punjabi in the area. If this condition of 1/3rd is not satisfied, then, in order to facilitate the switching over to the regional language as medium of instruction in the secondary stage, Hindi-speaking and Punjab-speaking pupils will be given the option of answering questions in Hindi/Punjabi for the first two years of the secondary stage. The regional language would, however, be a compulsory subject of study throughout the secondary stage.

4. To meet an unforeseen situation arising out of the demand for imparting education in a medium other than the regional language, the Government may issue further directions by way of necessary modifications.

5. In an unaided recognised school the medium of instruction will be determined by the management. It will not be obligatory on it to provide facilities for instruction in any other medium, but it will be incumbent on it to provide for the teaching of Punjabi or Hindi, as the case may be, as a second language.

6. These proposals do not apply to those pupils whose mother tongue is neither Punjabi nor Hindi. Suitable arrangements will be made for the education of such pupils in their mother tongue if there is a sufficient number of such pupils at one place to make this arrangement possible

ZONES

Hindi Speaking

Rohtak, Gurgaon, Karnal and Kangra districts, all the portions of Hissar district lying to the south of the Ghaggar river, and Jagadhari and Narainigarh tehsils of Ambala district.

Punjabi speaking

Amritsar, Jullundur, Gurdaspur, Ferozepore, Ludhiana, and Hoshiarpur districts, all the portions of Hissar district lying to the east of Ferozepore and Patiala side of Ghaggar river and Rupar and Kharar tehsils of Ambala district.

Bilingual areas

Simla and Ambala tehsil of Ambala district.

The pronouncement of this policy, though very unsatisfactory from the Punjabi-speaking point of view, or, for that matter, from the Sikh point of view, who felt that this concession to parents to compel their children to read Hindi, when their mother tongue was Punjabi was not justified, yet it evoked a very strong opposition amongst the communal-minded Hindus, particularly the Arya Samaj section. The Arya Samaj press took up the issue and started a propaganda that the Hindu institutions should not implement this policy laid down by the Government. A meeting of the Headmasters and Principals of the Hindu High Schools and Colleges was called in September, 1949, where it was resolved that the introduction of the Sachhar Formula would be resisted in the educational institutions, and it would not be implemented. It was in those very days that a circular letter, purporting to have been issued by the Punjab Government to all the District Magistrates dubbing Sikhs as criminals, came to light, which created a stir amongst the Sikhs, particularly when it came to be known that it had been endorsed by Swaran Singh, the then Home Minister of the Punjab. It began to be felt that Sikh Congressmen had no effective voice of their own, and were mere 'sycophants and showboys' as Hukam Singh later writing in the "Spokesman" on September 22, 1954, dubbed them.

The Shiromani Akali Dal had, however, earlier passed a resolution on 22nd April, 1949, after the Constituent Assembly had turned down safeguards resolved in August, 1947 even, calling upon the Akali legislators who had joined the Congress to show cause why they should not be asked and directed to withdraw from the Congress in view of the fact that they had not

been able to further and even safeguard the interests of the Sikhs in the Government set-up. It was then that Master Tara Singh, for the first time criticised the Government of India's policy and the mandate of the Ruling Party regarding the question of demarcation of the boundaries of the Punjab, and laid emphasis on the creation of a Punjabi-Speaking State wherein the Sikhs could safeguard their culture, language and traditions."'. It was then also that another Sikh leader, Jathedar Pritam Singh Gojran, while addressing the All India Sikh Students' Federation, made it clear that a linguistic province would be based on language alone, but that this would give them some safeguards as the Hindu communalists were out to exterminate both the Sikhs and the Punjabi language. Master Tara Singh further supplemented his statement, and clarified the position when he said on October 19, 1949, "Every minority except the Sikhs had been given justice. The Muslims demanded Pakistan and they got it. The scheduled castes wanted representation on population basis with the right to contest additional seats, and they got it. The Sikhs demanded that they should not be dominated by one single community, but they are being kicked for repeating the same demand which at one time the Hindus supported before partition—with which the Congress also sympathised." Master Tara Singh further said that it was surprising indeed that the same demand as was secular from the Congress point of view before the partition of the country, should be called communal when it was repeated in the Hindu majority dominated province of the Punjab, with that communal outlook which was being exhibited by the Arya Samaj Press, and the leaders of the Hindu public opinion in the Punjab. In fact communal tension in the State had continued from the pre-partitioned Punjab to post partitioned Punjab, except that the communities had changed. It began to be stated by the Punjab Hindu Press that Sikhism was not a separate religion but a part of Hinduism like the Arya Samaj and the Sanatan Dharam; and that only the British Rulers had tried to make it a separate religion and that policy was to be undone. These feelings in the majority, and the consequential attempt to implement them percolated through the Hindu services at all levels, which further

resulted in further accentuation of communal tension. It has been stated elsewhere that the Akali legislators in their 13 demands, had claimed the formulation of definite policy in regard to the recruitment of the Sikhs into Government service, and parity in the cabinet appointments. Both these points had been rejected. No service formula had been initiated or announced, nor was any parity maintained though, pronouncements were made from time to time that parity would be maintained in the cabinet.

Another factor that contributed towards the intensification and extension of the communal tension in the Punjab, was the role played by the Punjab vernacular press. The Sikhs had no paper of their own in the pre-partition time except the 'Ajit', a daily, and the "Akali Patrika", a weekly. The "Ajit" was the creation of Baldev Singh, and he had brought it at the time of Sikander-Baldev Singh Pact, in support of that pact and, with that of the Unionist Ministry. It had played an independent role during the pre-partition times, and had voiced the Sikh point of view. But with the partition of the country, and Baldev Singh joining the Congress and holding an office, this paper lost its circulation, till it was taken over by its present Editor as a personal concern. Therefore, there was not much of a Sikh press to play any role, or resist communal aggression, in the post-partition Punjab for quite some time. The pre-partition press of the Punjab consisted mostly of the daily papers like the "Milap" and the "Pratap" which belonged to the Arya Samaj section of the Punjab Hindus. They had a tremendous influence, though very communal at that time against Muslim aggression and communalism. Continuing that policy in the post-partition Punjab, this press reinforced by many other newspapers of the same trend, embarked upon a programme of suppression of the Sikh spirit on the plea that separate existence and entity of the Sikhs was not necessary in free India, and was very much in the way of the creation of one Nation. It was along this line of action, that the vernacular Arya Samaj Press tried to mould Hindu public opinion. This again had a very serious impact on the Sikhs. The writings of the days immediately after the partition, in the Hindu press

reflect the policy towards what they called 'secularism' meaning, thereby, the suppression of the minorities and their absorption in the Hindu society. This policy found support in the programmes adopted by the Congress High Command and the Ruling Party, though imperceptibly. The National Congress had always stood for demarcation of the units of the country on a linguistic basis. It had resisted the Bengal partition in 1905 on the plea that that would split a linguistic province or unit. It recognised the Andhra and Sind units in 1917 for organisation purposes. It finally recognised the creation of linguistic States as its policy in 1920 in its open Session. This stand was incorporated into the Moti Lal Nehru Report in 1928, where it was stated :

"If a province has to educate itself and do its daily work through the medium of its own language, it must necessarily be a linguistic area. If it happened to be a polyglot area, difficulties will continuously arise and the media of instruction and work will be two or even more languages. Hence, it becomes more desirable for provinces to be regrouped on a linguistic basis. Language, as a rule, corresponds with a special variety of culture, of tradition and literature. In a linguistic area, all these factors will help in the general progress of the province."

Again, the National Congress took an express stand in regard to the Sikhs in its resolution at the time of the Lahore Session in 1928, when it was stated that :

"The Congress assures the Sikhs, Muslim and other minorities that no solution thereof in the future constitution would be acceptable to the Congress what would not give full satisfaction to the parties concerned."

It reiterated the same stand in 1937 at the Calcutta Session when the resolution enunciated the 'Fundamental Rights' wherein it was stated :

"The main purpose of creating the linguistic States is that the culture, language and script of minorities and of the linguistic area shall be protected."

Jawahar Lal Nehru held the same opinion when he wrote in the "Glimpses of the World" :

"The Soviet solution of the minority problem has interest



AS PROPOSED
By
AKALI DAL

for us. We have to face a difficult minority problem ourselves. They went to the extreme length of reorganising each separate nationality, and encouraged it to carry on its work, and achievements already have been remarkable. In spite of these tendencies to introduce each to the uniformity of the union, the different parts are coming far nearer to each than they ever did under the centralised Government of Czars."

The National Congress, in its memoranda to the Boundary Commission in 1947 also said: "It is, therefore, essential as much to the peace of the two divisions of the Punjab as to the protection of Sikh culture and solidarity, that it should not be divided and that as many of them as is feasible be brought into the Eastern part of the Province." It was in this context of the policy of the Congress that Akali Legislators had formulated the 13 demands, giving an alternative to the Government that in case their demands were not accepted, a linguistic unit comprising Punjabi Speaking districts including Ambala be created. Pepsu had been formed by that time. This demand was also rejected.

The Sachhar Formula was not satisfactory inasmuch as by giving option to the Hindu parents to select the medium of education for their children, it enlarged the opportunity to disown one's language, thus creating a feeling in the Sikhs that, the two communities were apart and separate even in regard to the language. Of course, the Sikhs claimed to profess a different religion, and a distinct social order. But the attitude adopted by the Hindu leadership and their approach to the language problem by disowning Punjabi as their mother tongue, were the main cause of the cleavage between the two communities. Thereafter, this cleavage widened by the stand of the Punjab Hindus that their language be Hindi. It was in these circumstances that Master Tara Singh, for the first time, stated on the 10th October, 1949, that "The Sikhs have a culture different from the Hindus inasmuch as he counted the culture of the Sikhs to be Gurmukhi culture and as the language of the Sikhs was different, as the Hindus professed it to be, so too their traditions and histories were different, their heroes were different, their social order was different then there was no

reason why they should not claim the right of self-determination for themselves.”⁷⁷

The Maha Punjab Movement sponsored by a section of the Hindus demanding the merger of the entire Punjab, Pepsu, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and some districts of Uttar Pradesh, which they considered a single region geographically and economically, culturally and ethnically had serious political repercussions on the minds of the Sikhs. The impression was that it was an attempt to eliminate the slight effectiveness which the Sikhs had in the then Punjab and Pepsu. This further widened the gulf between the two communities in the political field. The relations between the two communities became unhappy; and influenced by the Hindu view point, the Congress attitude towards the Sikh demands hardened. Meanwhile, the language controversy accentuated further and the disillusionment of the Sikhs deepened, when men of light and leading amongst the Hindus started ridiculing Punjabi as ‘crude’, Dr. Sir Gokal Chand Narang, author of “The Transformation of the Sikhs” considered to be an admirer and a friend, even justified the disowning of the Punjabi by the Hindus. He wrote then, “That the Hindus must own Hindi in the altered circumstances of the country, because Hindi in Devanagiri script is going to be universally adopted in the country,” and added, “this is, however, not the only consideration, and would not lead anyone to abandon the language of the province. The real fact is that the language of the Punjab, particularly the East Punjab, is not as different from Hindi as Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Marathi, or even Gujarati. In its etymology, its context and almost in its vocabulary, it is nothing but Hindi, only crude, a little unpolished and rustic in its character.” Criticism from such quarters of Punjabi was taken as insulting the Sikhs. In fact, such criticism was most uncalled for and unjust.

Even an eminent authority like Dr. Gierson writes about Punjabi thus, “It is a homely language redolent of the Punjab of today ...but although homely in character, it must not be imagined that it is a crude form of speech, incapable of literature. Punjabi can express any ideas with its own stock of vocabularies, and is adopted for both prose and poetry.” Again, the

Punjab University Enquiry Committee, as far back as 1932, in its Report observed, "Punjabi is perhaps the oldest of all languages that derive their parentage from the Indo-Aryan languages, and it has more literary words in it than any other provincial language derived from the same source."

The Sikhs were supporting Punjabi not for the reason of religion, since, for the spread of religion, they always used the language and script which is used by the people where this preaching was done. A study of the Guru Granth Sahib would show that Guru Nanak used Punjabi as the vehicle of his thoughts in the Punjab. Outside the province, his sayings were either in Urdu mixed freely with Persian, Punjabi and Hindi words, and Prakrit also. The second, third and fourth Gurus used Punjabi in their sayings as their activities were limited to Northern India and when their preachings spread further, the fifth Guru began to use Hindi as then when he was addressing the Hindi speaking people. The teachings of the Ninth Guru are certainly in Hindi because his preachings were to the audience in Bihar. Similarly, the Tenth Guru also used a language for his sayings in accordance with the audience for whom the preaching was intended. It was, therefore, not the religious aspect that persuaded the Sikhs to advocate the cause of Punjabi. Rather, it was the reason that the Sikhs wanted Punjabi as the State language or the medium of education in the East Punjab, because Punjabi is the mother tongue of the people.

The cleavage between the two communities became so wide that another eminent Hindu leader, Rai Bahadur Badri Dass, admitted in one of his articles that appeared in the "Tribune", "In the three Punjabi examinations held in Gurmukhi script in 1948, 67 Sikh candidates appeared, while in the three Hindi language examinations held in 1948, 2930 candidates appeared. In the matriculation examination held in 1949, 12028 Hindu candidates had taken Hindi and 3940 Sikh candidates have taken Punjabi as their additional subject. All the examiners in the Punjabi examinations were Sikhs and all the examiners in the Hindi examinations were Hindus. This is clear that Hindus and Sikhs stand divided on this academic question, not as a

result of any pressure but as a result of their own choice and will. .”

Some high-ups in the Congress suspected the loyalty of the Sikhs to the Congress and looked with approval at the writings of the Arya Samaj Press, when it said that the Sikhs in the Congress were infiltrators—with an objective and strategy— infiltration strategy.

The Hindu view point of those days has been very aptly described by Baldev Raj Nayyar—a Punjabi Hindu—in his book, “The Minority Problem in the Punjab” published in 1966 when he writes :

“In fact, Akali leaders justify their presence in the Congress party in precisely these terms. When differences arise between the ‘ins’, the Akali group in the Congress party, and the ‘outs’ (Akali Dal), the ‘outs’ point to what the ‘ins’ have done for the Panth, whereupon the ‘ins’ list their achievements in the cause of the Panth. For some, even the publically expressed differences between the two groups are misleading for both work in collaboration ; the ‘outs’ put pressure through agitations, while the ‘ins’ bargain for more concessions as a condition of the support of their cohesive group for one or another faction into which the Congress may be divided.

“Although the purpose of the infiltration strategy has been to achieve political power for the attainment of Akali objectives, this strategy performs certain other function which may or may not necessarily be the reasons for any particular merger ”

Baldev Raj Nayyar in the same book categorised the Congress Sikhs in three grades. He writes : “In the first category are those who not only have repeatedly professed belief in secular nationalism in the period since independence but those who, when there has been an opportunity, have demonstrated their opposition to the Akali Dal in its demand for Punjabi Suba and its other communal demands.” He cited the prime examples of Partap Singh Kairon and Gurdial Singh Dhillon. In the second category he put those, “who, while they may express sympathy with the Akali Dal assert that they do so on non-communal basis.” In the third category he puts the group, leaders who find membership of the Congress party

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a suitable instrument for the pursuit of either personal or community goals, but are ready to forsake that party the moment such goals are frustrated, and return to the Akali Dal." He cites the example of Giani Kartar Singh.⁸ He would not put even Udham Singh Nagoke in the first category.

Such suspicions about the bonafides of the Sikh leadership and even the Sikhs in the Congress was not a healthy feature of the political life of this time. The cleavage had come to stay and was separating the two communities on the issues of language and culture, the only two things which the Punjabis felt to be common links between them. The Hindus and the Sikhs are followers of different religions and if they did not have a common language, surely these links were being cut asunder making the two peoples develop separately.

References and Notes

1. Punjab Assembly Debates, 18th March, 1959.
2. File No. 14(2) of 1949.
3. File No. 16, 21st May, 1949 with S.G.P.C.
4. "The Tribune", 15th November, 1948.
5. "Punjab Gazette" (Urdu Weekly) 19th September, 1949
6. "Akali Patrika", 11th October, 1949
7. *Ibid*, 11th October, 1949.
8. "Minority Problem in the Punjab" by Baldev Raj Nayyar, p. 138 (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1966)

PUNJABI SUBA CONCEIVED

VII

It was on the 15th November, 1948 that at the instance of Master Tara Singh, the 23 Akali Legislators had resolved that, if five statutory safeguards in their charter of demands were not conceded, "the Sikhs should be allowed to form a new province of seven districts i.e. Hoshiarpur, Jullundur, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Ambala." Master Tara Singh had given the slogan of Punjabi Suba but as an alternative. It was not appreciated then. It was under his direction that Hukam Singh sought, "demarcation of the linguistic State on the basis of Punjabi" in his memorial to the President of the Constituent Assembly in September, 1949. A representative convention of the Sikhs, however, had adopted Punjabi Suba as its objective in April, 1949, when Master Tara Singh and other Akali leaders were in jail. The objective of Punjabi Suba, fathered by Master Tara Singh was very much before the Sikhs. When Master Tara Singh was released in October, 1949, he took it up, and the Shiromani Akali Dal embarked on the programme to educate public opinion to its support. Conferences were held at different places in this connection. The Constituent Assembly was still engaged in the drafting of the Constitution, and it was hoped that something would be done for the Sikh community. There was no response, however, and the Punjab Hindu press lashed at the

Sikhs and its leadership as usual. Even the "Tribune" in its leaderette of the 12th November, 1949, wrote, "Why the Sikhs should show such a dread of the so-called Hindu majority in the Punjab, when they are ready to accept the Hindu majority in the Centre, which has a far greater power than the provinces, we do not know? The logic of the communal fanatic defies rational understanding. He is so desperately keen on promoting his own claims and he forgets that other interests and claims are to be reckoned with." Discussing further the implication of the demand, it said, "Again, why should a Hindu minority in a proposed Sikh province remain under a permanent Sikh majority if the Sikhs show such a distrust of the Hindu majority. The logic of the communalist leads straight to the exchange of population, and to the establishment of an independent State." Such was the writing which appeared in the Arya Samaj press in the East Punjab too. In most cases it was scurrilous and venomous. Master Tara Singh retorted in a signed article that appeared on the 27th November 1949 in the daily "Ajit", where the stand of the Akali Dal was explained. Master Tara Singh referred to the letters which he had written to Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel giving his reasons for the creation of a linguistic State on the basis of Punjabi language, and wrote: "According to my estimate, this province will be composed of 7, 8 or 9 districts of the East Punjab and more. People may call it a Sikh area because there will be more religious, cultural and social affinity and oneness. This will be a province based on language alone. It may be given the name of 'Punjabi Suba'. He refuted the argument that the system of joint electorate had eliminated the danger to the minorities, and in this connection he wrote in the said article: "One of the reasons given is that now that joint electorate has been introduced, the minority will not be apprehensive of their future. My reply to that is that the newly created Punjabi Suba will also have joint electorate. If joint electorate is a panacea for nationalism, then why should anybody apprehend that his position will be jeopardised by the creation of the Punjabi Suba. The Hindu position will be as strong as before because they are in majority at the Centre."

Further explaining his stand, he wrote: "Another argument that is put forward is that if such a province is created the Sikhs will have to get out of the rest of the country. I am surprised at this. Such a threat was not given when Pakistan was being created. Muslims are still living in India but when we ask for a linguistic state within the union of India, we are threatened with eviction from the rest of the country. We have Pepsu Union, where Sikhs are in majority. Does that effect the position of the Sikhs in the rest of the country?"¹

The writing in the Punjab Hindu press concerning the demand of Punjabi ūba by the Shiromani Akali Dal became so vile and vulgar, and took such an abusive turn that this evoked a very illuminating and informative article from the pen of Arthur Moore, a well-meaning Englishman who had gone on fast unto death with Gandhiji in November, 1947, when Gandhiji protested against the withholding of certain amounts to Pakistan by the Indian Government. Arthur Moore wrote in the weekly "Thought" on October 29, 1949: "We must learn by our mistakes. It is bad enough that we have today two nations in the Indian sub-continent. Let us not do anything that might tend to the creation of a third. Let it be said in fairness to the war-like Master Tara Singh that he is not demanding an independent Sikh National State.... His greater concern is much the same as that of those who are clamouring for linguistic provinces, namely, a redistribution of boundaries so as to provide the Sikhs with a viable province in which there should be Punjabi. The parallel even goes so far as the demand for the special script, for the Sikhs want the Gurmukhi script for Punjabi, just as the Hindi advocates want the Devanagari script to be made compulsory for Hindi... It is distressing to find that responsible Hindu-owned papers appear to have forgotten everything and learnt nothing. The Birla press urges the Government to repeat with the Sikhs the mistakes made with the Muslims at a time, when the Muslims too had no thought of demanding an independent State and had not formulated the disastrous two nation theory....

"Since the advent of independence, there are no comparable Sikh leaders in the Congress. Those who adhere to the

Congress can be compared rather to the Ali brothers who made deals with the Congress, but always put their concept of Islam first. Hindus are nourishing a most dangerous delusion if they persuade themselves that Hinduism is on the eve of a new period of reabsorption of protestant Hindu elements. They should remember that though they reabsorbed Buddhism in India, they thereby drove it abroad, spread it far and wide, and made it a world religion; whereas Hinduism does not travel beyond the borders of India. The Sikhs already have a far stronger foothold in Singapore and Shanghai than Hindus either have or desire to have. Hinduism's claim is to be a national tolerant self-contained religion, though as a monistic philosophy, it has a universal appeal. Also it is idle to deny that Sikhs have distinctive physical characteristics and aptitudes. They can no more be absorbed by Hindus than Punjabis could be absorbed by Bengalis, Tamils or other provincial people. That is an argument for a separate province of a federal State and not for an independent country. Therefore, while Master Tara Singh is in the mood to demand no more, India will do well to agree with him..." He concluded his article by writing. "It should be obvious that a harmonious India will not be possible unless we have a contented and loyal Sikh community "

It began to be felt by 1950 that East Punjab as it stood then as an administrative unit was neither culturally nor linguistically homogenous. There was the Patiala and East Punjab States Union, where Punjabi was the State language but there were certain areas, therein, where Punjabi was neither cultivated nor treated as a State language. Similarly the East Punjab Government had declared Punjab to be bilingual, and it was felt that such an arrangement was not likely to work. It needed an investigation, as to how it would be practicable to separate the Punjabi-speaking area from the non-Punjabi-speaking one. There was, of course, no difference of opinion that such an area, when demarcated would be a viable unit, or would not take long to become so. The stand taken and the suggestion put forward for the acceptance of the principle of a linguistic State based on the Punjabi language also was for the

reason, that it would constitute the greatest gesture of goodwill that the Indian leadership would ever make towards the Sikhs ; and, at the same time it would have been the best thing to solve the problem of the then communal-ridden Punjab. It was also stressed that it would channelise public opinion in East Punjab and Patiala States Union into healthy and democratic lines by shifting the emphasis from the communal channels to economic and social issues. Such a step would have been the most effective way of weaning people from communalism and separatism, and soon no dispute would be left between two communities on the basis of their culture and language. It was felt that this would be a measure that would cement the relations between the two communities by encouraging common factors which would be the basis for the building of a future Punjab. The demand for a Punjabi-speaking province afforded an opportunity to the leadership for sublimating their squabbles into sound nationalist parliamentarianism. Had the Punjabi Suba been conceded in 1950 and the Sikhs been satisfied, the shape of things might have been different. The separatist tendency would have totally abated, and the Sikhs would have found themselves following the stream of a common nationalism. There were growing tendencies in the Sikhs at the time to abandon outer form and symbols, and there was a tempo for merger into Hinduism. The step of amalgamation would have continued, as Khuswant Singh prophesied in 1953, when he wrote his book "The Sikhs"; and there would have been "Little doubt that, before the century has run its course Sikh religion would have become a branch of the Hindus and the Sikhs a part of the Hindu social system."² But it was not to be—perhaps for the good of the Sikh faith and Sikh religion. The bitterness between the two communities was made to grow. They went asunder on the issue of Punjabi Suba, one supporting it and the other opposing it.

The demand was not conceded by the Congress leadership. When the opposition stiffened, from both the Hindus and the Congress, the Sikhs became all the more particular, and laid more emphasis on its acceptance. It is always rare in history that doing of right things from the broader national point of

view coincides with a concession to the minority. The acceptance of this principle at that time and its implementation, would have been a great show of goodwill to a minority that had suffered, and, at the same time, it would have been the best thing that could be done to solve the problem of Punjab and to some extent, the problem of the defence of India on the North Western border. However, patience and a liberal outlook were needed with which to probe the problem as many difficulties had to be surmounted. Unfortunately, both the Punjab leadership and the leadership at the highest level in the country did not bring such an outlook, with the result that a demand purely linguistic in its inception, took a communal turn, and became entirely a demand of the Sikhs, and they alone became the protagonists and supporters of the Punjabi language and Punjabi culture. This was the greatest blow to the growth of Indian nationalism.

It was in such a bitter atmosphere that Hukam Singh, the then Akali representative in the Lok Sabha, explaining the stand of the Akali Dal at a press conference at Bombay on 1st January, 1950 said: "The demand for the reconstitution of the Punjab on a linguistic basis, through an impartial agency sponsored by the Shiromani Akali Dal, is the only means for the preservation of the Punjabi culture and language. It is a perfectly democratic demand and only a most preverse imagination can label it as communal. We, in fact, expect the Congress to fulfil all its pledges to the minorities." Reminding Nehru of his assurance in August, 1945 to give the Sikhs a sense of freedom, Hukam Singh stated: "Exactly this is the sense of freedom which the Sikhs lack. An influential section of the Punjab Congressmen and all the topmost leaders of the country, including Mahatma Gandhi, supported the demand for a Punjabi speaking province. Now the sudden emergence of the strong politically conscious minority, suffering under acute persecution at the hands of absolute communal majority in this New Punjab, has caused all frustration at aggressive communal consciousness which has led them to disown their mother tongue and decry a very reasonable and democratic demand for a linguistic province. This consciousness of an

immutable state majority of one community and the resultant feeling of an abject minority consciousness, vitiates all terms of secular outlook developing amongst Congressmen, and prevents the Sikhs from making their useful contribution to the cultural, political and economic life of the province. ...In the services, too, most of the senior officers who have spent a part of their service life in a communal atmosphere naturally could not be expected to revolutionise their thought processes suddenly with the emergence of a free independent Republic which left them entire masters of the show in the province. The actual working of the Punjab Administration and Congress politics has amply demonstrated that far from weaning themselves from this irrational outlook, they have been aggressively pursuing the policy of deliberate discrimination of the Sikhs." He concluded: "The stand of the Akali Dal is purely national. The demand for a Punjabi-speaking province is entirely democratic. It has nothing of separatism or disruptionism about it. We do not want a separate state, much less an independent one. We only ask for readjustment of boundaries on a purely linguistic and cultural basis. Even then we are decried and dubbed as communal. It is cruelty on the part of some sections to misunderstand us, and sheer dishonesty on the part of those who misrepresent us."

It would be appreciated that the demand then formulated was solely based on language. Its inception was a controversy on language, and there was no concept of having an area with a certain percentage. The literature and pamphlets issued by the Akali Dal definitely contemplated only the separation of Gurgaon district and one tehsil of Karnal and some part of Hissar, and in such area the Sikhs would be only 40 to 42 per cent, but this was not appreciated at the time by the Hindu leadership. The Hindu view was reflected in an article by a gentleman writing under Nom-de-plume of 'Punjabi' in the "Tribune" under the caption 'Sikh Demand Analysed'. He wrote: "The Sikhs are following a short-sighted policy in raising the cry of separatism, whether it is a Sikh province or an independent Sikh State. It is unlikely that this can be obtained without giving rise to dangerous centrifugal tendencies,

the ultimate outcome of which no one can foresee today. Such a demand would be bitterly resented by the Hindus in the Punjab and the country as a whole. If the worst comes to the worst, and ultimately they succeed in breaking from the country, they would be most probably asked to look to themselves and the country would refuse to give any support or guarantee for the survival of the Sikh Homeland precariously perched between India and Pakistan. It would not be a Sikh province with all economy and full Central protection, without any reciprocal obligations which Master Tara Singh and his henchmen are complacently planning to erect by sword-rattling and ominous threats reminiscent of the Muslim League strategy." How the Hindu intelligentsia and the Arya Samaj Press began to name the demand for the demarcation of new area on the basis of language to be a demand for a Sikh State or a Sikh Homeland was beyond the comprehension of a Sikh in the street. Such a demand was being accepted and implemented in the rest of the country without any objection, but its implementation in the Punjab was being opposed tooth and nail by those very Hindus whose mother tongue was Punjabi and who should have supported it. This demand, of course, was quite distinct and separate from other grievances of the Sikhs, that they were being discriminated against in all walks of life, particularly in the services. The figures already quoted of the services elsewhere both in Punjab and Pepsu would amply bear out the statement that they were not being given justice. How the demand for a linguistic State was a Sikh demand and for a Sikh Homeland could not be understood. And how this demand visualised a Sikh majority area was not understood either.

The stand of the Akali Dal was abundantly clarified by Hukam Singh in his Presidential Address at the Panthik Conference at Ludhiana on 26th March, 1950, wherein he sketched the history of Sikh relations with the Congress during the critical period when the negotiations with the Cabinet delegation were on, in 1946, and when the Sikhs went to the extent of lifting the boycott of participation in the Constituent Assembly and accepting the 16th May Plan, thus giving full

diplomatic support to the Congress in order to isolate the League, and refused to have direct negotiations with the British even. Yet, when power had come in the hands of the Congress, it refused to concede Sikh demands on the ground that conditions in the country had changed, but the Sikhs had not changed their communal mentality. He added, "This is correct that the Sikhs are not changed. The Sikhs are more concerned with the Punjab. Before the partition Muslims were in Majority and the Hindus and the Sikhs were in minority. With the migration of the Muslim population, Hindus have become a majority overnight, and their communal mentality has taken up the garb of nationalism. The Sikhs were previously a minority, and now too they are in the same position. They have to protect themselves, and their mentality must remain the same. Previously they tried to resist the Muslim majority domination, and now Hindu majority domination has become all the more crushing. There were three communities previously, and each by itself was a sufficient protection against the domination of the other. Then the Hindus supported the Sikhs against the Muslim domination. Now the Sikh has to protect himself from the communal mentality of the Hindus.

"The Sikhs have never made any illegitimate demand. Now, too, their chief grievance is that Punjabi is the language of this province and the Hindus are disowning it. Hindi has the national status, and will be an All India language. The Hindus are refusing a rightful place to Punjabi, even in the Punjab itself.

"The Congress has already accepted the principle of linguistic States and is acting upon it. The Sikhs demand the creation of a linguistic State on the basis of Punjabi. Since this otherwise benefits them, it is being refused, when it is neither religious nor communal. The second demand relates to the services, where discriminatory treatment is accorded. We do not ask for anything more than we are entitled to. All we seek is that selection should be on the basis of merit. But when the selection itself is based on communal consideration then how does merit count?"

However, both the Arya Samaj Press and the speeches of their leaders, and of the Congress leaders continued to dub this demand as communal, and a subterfuge to create a Sikh State or a Homeland for the Sikhs. One could understand the opposition from the Arya Samaj headquarters, but it was painful for the Sikhs to see that the Congress leadership too started a virulent propaganda against the demand. The particular strategy of the Congress leadership, inspired from the Centre, was to organise the Sikh elements against the linguistic demand. Giani Kartar Singh, the then Revenue Minister and one of the biggest protagonists of the Punjabi Suba at one time, was made to characterise the demand as a demand for a Sikh State, and as such, unjustified. While addressing a conference of the Harijans in Jullundur on 18th July, 1950, he opposed the demand by saying, "The Sikhs were in majority only in two tehsils, Tarn Taran (Amritsar) and Moga (Ferozepore), hence the demand was unjustified."³ That Giani Kartar Singh should call this a Sikh demand could hardly be appreciated. Ishar Singh Mujhel, an old Akali and the then Development Minister, while addressing congregation at the Model Town Gurdwara in Abdullapur (Ambala), declared that he could not cherish the idea of a separate Homeland for the Sikhs which would confine them in an airtight compartment. The demand for Sikhistan would necessarily tend to further division of the land. The consequences of partition were never pleasant, and the Punjabis had tasted its fruits. They would never allow its repetition.⁴

The Congress policy to spearhead the opposition to the creation of the Punjabi linguistic State created a rift between the Congress and the Sikhs after nearly 2½ years of collaboration and cooperation and began to wean the Sikhs away from the Congress. It was then that the Shiromani Akali Dal issued a show cause notice in early July, 1950 to the Panthic M.L.A.'s who had merged in the Congress Assembly party in early 1948, why they should not leave the Congress party and have a block of their own. This led to the Sikh legislators meeting in Ambala on the 23rd July, 1950, with a view to consider the situation created by the expectant directive of the Akali Dal to

withdraw. The meeting set up a five-man sub-committee under the Presidentship of Baldev Singh to contact the Akali Dal Executive to discuss the issues involved, and to persuade the Akali Dal not to issue the directive. Amongst those who attended the meeting were Baldev Singh, Giani Kartar Singh, Ishar Singh Mujhel, Gurbachan Singh Bajwa, Shiv Singh, Man Singh, Sardul Singh, Tara Singh, Ujjal Singh, Sarmukh Singh, Jaswant Singh, Waryam Singh, Narinder Singh, Swaran Singh, Dalip Singh Kang and Gurbachan Singh Ferozepori. These gentlemen felt that they had not been able to do anything to get the Sikh demand conceded, but they were not in favour of leaving the Congress benches and tried to bring all pressure to bear upon the Akali Dal not to issue the directive. The Akali Dal had constituted a Sub-committee of three including myself, which met the General Secretary of the Congress Assembly party on behalf of the erstwhile Panthik M.L.A.'s requesting the postponement of the matter on the assurance that "all demands of the Sikhs that pertain to the constitution had been duly incorporated, and some others were likely to be met before the new elections." But the situation had developed to such an extent, and the Congress leadership had taken such an anti-Sikh attitude towards the demand, that the Shiromani Akali Dal Working Committee in its meeting held on 20th July, 1950, adopted the following resolution by a majority of 10 to 3. The three members of the Working Committee, who opposed this resolution included Amar Singh Dosanjh. Jathedar Pritam Singh Gojran remained neutral. The text of the resolution was :

"Whereas the Shiromani Akali Dal had allowed the Panthik M.L.A.'s to Join the Congress Assembly party in the Centre and the province as a gesture of goodwill and in full faith and belief that the Congress, with men of eminence like Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Dr. Rajindra Prashad, and Sardar Patel at the top, would respond, particularly at the time when the Sikh community in its displaced, ruined and uprooted state, needed all constructive sympathy and support and a new status in the set-up of the country ;

"And whereas the Shiromani Akali Dal had been patiently

waiting all this while, hoping and still hoping that the Congress would appreciate the sentiments and ambition of the Sikh community, especially when they are in consonance with nationalistic and secular principles;

“And whereas all these hopes have been sadly belied and battered by continuous oppression and suppression of the Sikhs in all walks of life. Therefore, the Shiromani Akali Dal, after deep and considered deliberation, directs all M.L.As. who succeeded on the Panthik ticket to resign forthwith from the Congress and create a separate Panthik bloc in the Assembly Party.”

This directive was conveyed to Baldev Singh, the Defence Minister, Government of India, and two Ministers of the Punjab, Giani Kartar Singh and Ishar Singh Mujhail.

This move of the Shiromani Akali Dal sparked off a strong opposition of the Congress amongst the Sikhs, which made the Congress High Command mobilise its forces amongst the Sikhs to oppose the creation of a linguistic State. It was then that Partap Singh Kairon, the then President, Punjab State Congress, announced his extreme opposition to the division of the State on a linguistic basis. He also said that the need of the hour was to extend the boundaries of the Punjab, and he also declared that he would spearhead the movement amongst the Sikhs in order to oppose the creation of a linguistic State. When asked as to why the State had not yet begun to recognise Punjabi as the official language, he evaded the question by saying that Hindi had not been recognised as such so far. He even opposed separate concession to any particular type of backward class, and posed the question as to why every concession should not be equally applicable to all backward classes, Hindu, Sikh or Christian, “Why should any one ask for special privileges for Sikh backward classes alone” he said. He announced the calling of a convention for December 15, 1950, of all Congress and Nationalist Sikhs to combat the growing, according to him, communalism among the Sikhs. He declared that the Congress and Nationalist Sikhs had so far not taken a united stand, and hereafter they would stoutly oppose the creation of a linguistic

State or the grant of a concession to the Sikh backward classes. It was then and thereafter that the Congress openly started opposing a linguistic State in the Punjab.

At the same time, the Government embarked upon coercive and repressive measures such as arresting many of the Akali leaders and workers, and promulgating orders banning all public meetings in the province of Punjab. Profuse promises were given to the erstwhile Akali M.L.As in order to stop them from obeying the Akali Dal mandate. The Government patronage and corrupt influence had its effect, and it was sad to see that except for one M.L.A, Jaswant Singh Duggal, nobody resigned from the Congress Legislative party.

'A correspondent' in an article in "The Tribune" on 3rd October, 1950, conveyed the Sikh point of view thus: "The so-called separatist tendencies among the Sikhs rightly appeared after 1948 because of their disillusionment after the merger. Their early decision for a merger also showed that they placed their entire faith in the Congress which betrayed them.

"The Congress should be thankful, if not grateful, to the Sikhs for throwing in their lot with the Congress in spite of the fact that they were offered a separate unit by Pakistan and a commanding position of the Sikhs in certain spheres and departments." He complained replying thus to another Correspondent's view point: "The deliberate confusion between the Punjabi-speaking province and separate Sikh State is a clever piece of propaganda meant to stifle the Sikh demand. Your 'correspondent' rightly reveals the futility of a separate Sikh State as a means of securing freedom and independence. A slightly improved position for the Sikhs in the Punjabi-speaking province would wean the majority from its irrational attitude and remove the fears of the Sikhs. It would free the province from the soul decaying communal virus and pave the way for healthy political alignment and cultural, economic or ideological growth. The idea of exchange of population is preposterous for, as correctly diagnosed by the author, it does not mean freedom from the Centre. Such an unhealthy apprehension is born out of a feeling that the Sikhs are not as true or loyal sons of the soil as they themselves are.

"Your correspondent, however, forgets that during a period of two years, the Pepsu administration has become an out-station wing of the State Ministry instead of a union of the Sikh States. Its three successive Governments have failed, because the real representatives of the people were never associated with the administration. The reduction of a clear majority to 40% betrays a prejudicial outlook. The Sikhs should be thankful to your correspondent for disclosing to the world that the failure of the Panthik M.L.As. to come out of the Congress was due to coercive measures of the Government, i.e., arresting Akali leaders and the banning of public meetings."

Two parallel forces started opposing the creation of the Punjabi-speaking province. One force, of course, was the Arya Samaj section that had for its objective the elimination of the Sikhs from the body politic, and their total absorption in the Hindu society. They never concealed their objective, and they used their press and platform to this end. Their opposition even to the use of the Punjabi language in Gurmukhi script was based on the principle, "Hindi, Hindu and Hindustan"; and they made no pretensions to secularism or anything of that kind. The other force was the Congress, which was secular by profession and principles and which comprised all communities with a tradition and history of sacrifices for the cause of the country, and which was the greatest protagonist of the adoption of rationalism in the reorganisation of the States. And with that objective it had embarked on such a reorganisation, starting with the creation of Andhra. But when its leadership spearheaded the opposition to the demand for a Punjabi-speaking area, it made the Sikhs feel, that they were being discriminated against. Naturally it seemed strange that Sikhs alone in the country should be discriminated against, when the creation of a Punjabi-speaking State and the acceptance of such demand would only lead to a slight benefit to their position in the province of the Punjab. This discrimination was taken to be a reflection on their loyalties and a suspicion about their bonafides. Naturally, such feelings generated a sort of hatred for the policies of the Congress, and a

feeling that the Congress had become communal in character and was using the Sikhs on its rolls as stooges to thwart and defeat the community's ambitions.

It will also be recalled that the Census was about to take place in 1951, and it was against that background that the Hindu leadership of the Punjab started its virulent propaganda to persuade their coreligionists in the Punjab to disown Punjabi entirely. The objective was communal in order to show that the majority in the Punjab was not even Punjabi-speaking. Most of the Hindus in the Congress like Shri Virender, Jagat Narain, Badri Dass and others were in the forefront of the movement. In this connection, a large convention of all the Hindu parties met at Amritsar in November, 1950. The nature of the propaganda and thinking can be assessed from the address that was delivered by Rai Bahadur Badri Dass, an Arya Samaj leader, who presided over the convention. He explained the reasons for Hindu opposition: "One reason why the demand for the Punjabi-speaking province is opposed appears to be the linking of the language with the Gurmukhi script. The Government has, for reasons not all comprehensible, conceded the Sikhs' sponsored proposition. I do not know whether the expert opinion in the matter affecting the vital interest of the children was consulted before the promulgation of the formula. It is certain, however, that the public was not taken into confidence. The impression left on the minds of the people was that undue haste was used in a matter of supreme importance. Every child of 6 or 7 years is compelled to master two scripts, and thus waste a most precious period of school-going age." This pertained to his opposition to the Sachhar Formula. While speaking about the demand for Punjabi Suba, he said, "another and perhaps the most vociferous demand is for a Punjabi-speaking province. This demand is equally vehemently opposed by persons outside the Sikh fold. Here, again, the demand is not based on reason. No economic or other advantage is alleged. The whole movement is supported by terror tactics. No attempt is made to convince the non-Sikh population of the State of the advantages of a truncated province. We are Punjabis and have.

already got a province bearing the name of Punjab. The idea is to gain by force what cannot be supported by reason. This has given rise to bitterness and discord among the people. Administratively, a province demanded by our Sikh brethren containing two warring communities will be extremely difficult to manage. The greater the vehemence with which the demand is pushed, the wider becomes the gulf between the two communities. This is extremely unfortunate. Instead of joining hands for making up our losses due to partition, we are applying our energies to hampering the progress of our country."

It will also be recalled that Pratap Singh Kairon, while spearheading the opposition to the creation of Punjabi Suba, had announced the holding of a convention in December, 1950. Accordingly a convention, designated the All India Congress Sikh Convention, was held on 15th December, 1950, at Amritsar. It was addressed by its President, Sardul Singh Caveesher, once a member of the Congress Working Committee, who advised the Akali leaders that their slogan of Punjabi Suba was synonymous with the slogan raised by Jinnah while demanding Pakistan. He said further in his address: "The Akalis are agitated over the question of the Punjabi language, Punjabi script and the carving of a Punjabi State. The question of Punjabi language and script has almost been settled by the Sachhar Formula. If the Hindus or Sikhs desire any further modification that can be amicably effected by mutual discussions and mutual goodwill. Similarly, the question of a Punjabi-speaking State can better be settled by mutual goodwill than by sabre-rattling. I have already explained that the creation of a Punjabi State is not in the best interest of the Sikhs. But if there are people who think otherwise, they can achieve their object better by reasonably winning over to their side the opposition. There can be no fundamental objection to the creation of a State on a linguistic basis. The Congress is committed to that. But is this question, and other allied questions of greater importance than the question of ending the misery of the displaced persons, and the question of the supply of food, clothing, shelter, education and medical aid to the millions of people spread all over the country who live

from day to day an abject and miserable life? It is a pity that we waste our breath and time in quarrelling over increase and decrease of power in certain compartments of the house, when the whole house is on fire. The question of linguistic provinces is an All India question. The Andhra, the Maharashtra, the Kanada are all interested in the amicable settlement of this question. But the final settlement can certainly wait for a few years more. Our immediate need is to end the misery of the people who sleep in the open without any covering or shelter, who do not get enough food to keep them alive, and who have no means of livelihood even if they are prepared to put in honest labour to earn their living. It is callousness of the most heinous type. It is extremely sinful to quarrel over petty political or communal questions when starvation and misery faces millions of our brethren day in, day out."⁶

This convention was attended by Surjit Singh Majithia, Giani Zail Singh, Sardar Buta Singh, Jathedar Udham Singh, Sarmukh Singh Chamak, Gurdial Singh Dhillon, Jathedar Sohan Singh Jallalusman and others. While dealing with the question of a Punjabi-speaking State, the convention passed the following resolution :

"This convention is of the opinion that the formation of the new States on Communal basis is bound to lead to fissiparous tendencies in the body politic of the country, and must be opposed by all those who desire to work for the unity and strength of the country. The convention further thinks that all such questions should be postponed in the present financial difficulties facing the country, till the people are in a position to decide such questions satisfactorily keeping in view cultural, economic, financial, administrative and other necessary factors."

There was a general suspicion in the Sikh leadership that the so-called Nationalist Sikhs had been inspired by the Congress leaders at the Centre at the highest level to organise an opposition to the Punjabi Sikhs. This suspicion was supported by the fact that Nehru, the then President of the Congress also, did not care to understand the linguistic charac-

ter of the Punjabi Suba demand. Speaking on the Gandhi Jaianti day at Delhi in 1951 he referred to the Sikh demand for a 'Sikh State' saying that it was childish and smacked of Muslim League's separatism. On another occasion, at a press conference, he revealed the inner working of his mind when he said in reply to a question, that, he would not agree to the creation of the Punjabi-speaking province because it would imperil the Northern borders of India. These two statements were met with a retort by the President of the Shiromani Akali Dal, who in a statement to the press, said, "It is understood in all quarters that the proposed Punjabi-speaking province would not create any Sikh majority in the population, but would only accord recognition to the Punjabi linguistic and cultural traditions. One fails to understand why the State is quite secure, if the Sikhs are kept below 30% in population but there arises threat to the peace and security of the country if the position improves and they become 40%. There seems to be some suspicion in the minds of Nehru and his colleagues about the fidelity of the Sikhs. Such a state of affairs is particularly deplorable in the face of their past sacrifices in the freedom struggle and the heavy sufferings undergone by them due to partition."

Simultaneously, a Panthik convention was held on 16th December, 1950, at Amritsar which was addressed by Master Tara Singh who summed up the Sikh grievances under six heads. Amongst these heads, the first demand was for a Punjabi-speaking province. Of course, he dealt with his disagreement with the Government over the proper rehabilitation of the refugees and with the corruption that was increasing, but reiterated: "That the Sikhs and Hindus are two branches of the same tree depending very much on each other." He said then that though he himself was very much misunderstood, the fact remained that both were brothers. This convention adopted the resolution that provincial boundaries be changed on linguistic and cultural basis to promote the natural development of different parties. It was never said anywhere in that Panthik convention that it would be a Sikh majority area or a Sikh Homeland created. The emphasis was only on the demar-

cation of the Punjabi-speaking area. Hukam Singh, later President of the Shiromani Akali Dal, clarified the position thus. He said, "What the Sikhs desire today is only a respectable and dignified citizenship. They expect no favour and they ask for no concession. They want protection from the tyranny of the communal majority, to which they are entitled to as law abiding citizens of the country. The Sikhs believe that they can secure this protection, if a Punjabi-speaking province is conceded to them, where they will have a more effective voice. It must be clearly and definitely understood that the Sikhs do not desire a separate state, nor even necessarily a Sikh majority area." He reminded of what Nehru had said on April 5, 1945, that "distribution of provincial boundaries are essential and inevitable..... I stand for semi-autonomous unit as well. If the Sikhs desire to function as such a unit, I should like them to have a semi-autonomous unit in the province so that they may have a sense of freedom." Hukam Singh, during this interview and enunciating the Akali Dal demand, further said, "if the Congress is really honest about its secular ideals, it should not only facilitate the creation of the Punjabi-speaking province, but make it an article of faith."⁶

Opposition by the Punjab Hindu leadership to the demand of the Sikhs in their speeches increased the cleavage between the two communities and gave an impression that they were distinct entities and different peoples at war with each other, each swearing and shouting by a different language and a separate culture. The Census of 1951 was the climax, when the Punjab Hindus, by and large, influenced by the propaganda of their leaders, disowned Punjabi and recorded Hindi as their mother tongue. The propaganda was so widespread that it percolated through the Hindu officials also, who had been employed in the census operation. The situation became so tense that it led to disorder at several places and communal attacks, resulting in a law and order situation. Conditions became such that the Prime Minister had to direct that the language should not be recorded in the census at all; and Rajgopalachari, the then Home Minister, had to admit

in the Lok Sabha that "for some time before and after the Census, a controversy has been going on in the Punjab and Pepsu areas, particularly on the language question. A section of Hindus have been asking people to return Hindi as their mother tongue instead of Punjabi. This has caused resentment among the Sikhs, with the consequence that by both, in public speeches in the Punjab, strong statements and counter statements have been made on this issue. On the 10th February an altercation occurred between a section of Hindus and Sikhs in a village in Jullundur district, leading to a disturbance, as a result of which one person was murdered. It is believed that the returns submitted on the question of the language have been incorrect in a large part of the Punjab, i.e., as to whether the mother tongue of the person concerned is Punjabi or Hindi."

What blatantly false declarations were made by Hindus in this regard is abundantly proved from what Dewan Alakh Dhari, an influential Hindu and erstwhile Chief Minister of a princely State, said in a letter appearing in "The Tribune" on May 20, 1953, that, "In the Census of 1951, the Hindus in Punjab and Pepsu have made their position perfectly clear on this behalf (Punjabi-speaking state) by declaring to a man that Hindi is their lingua franca." This evoked a stiff rejoinder from Principal Jodh Singh, which appeared in "The Tribune" of May 21, 1953, wherein he observed very aptly: "By lingua franca perhaps he (Alakh Dhari) means mother tongue because there was no column of lingua franca in the Census returns... Exactly this demand on the part of the Hindus is strengthening the demand for the Punjabi-speaking State. Was the declaration of Hindi based on facts? I hope Shri Alakh Dhari will pause and think whether this attitude of Hindus 'almost to a man' is commendable. This is a sample of the general Hindu attitude, which has nurtured linguistic rivalry and strife in the province.

"The result of the strife is not merely mutual distrust, but it has far-reaching effects. The internal struggle and bitterness has undermined the economic development of the province, hampered its cultural advancement and retarded the

educational progress of the younger generation, when the language itself is the basis of strife, educational advancement cannot be dreamt of.

"This state of affairs exists only in this part of the country. It warrants immediate attention. Hence the need of demarcating the Punjabi-speaking State calls for top priority."

The situation in 1951-1953 had come to be that the demand for the Punjabi Suba had taken a communal turn, and the people of the Punjab had come to be split into two distinct categories, one supporters of the Punjabi Suba, comprising largely Sikhs with a sprinkling of Hindus; and the other the opposition comprising the entire Hindu population led by the Arya Samaj section. This situation was the culmination of the Sikhs' grievances against the discriminatory treatment accorded to them by the Central leadership. The position was truly depicted by a staff correspondent of "The Times of India" when he wrote in the issue of August 15, 1951: "Admittedly most of the Sikhs are sore against the Congress. In the Punjab in particular, the so-called Congressmen have been hostile to the Sikhs and to all what the Sikhs stand for. Their anti-Punjabi attitude was the last straw to exercise the patience of the Sikhs.... No leading Congressman, no topmost national leader thought it worthwhile to understand the view point of the Sikhs, or to hold aloft the olive branch of peace. The whole thing they did was to denounce them with bell, book and candle; and they thought they exercised the evil spirit, and that the Sikh problem was thereby solved for good. .. They (The Sikhs) would welcome any alliance which would strengthen the cause of the Punjabi province, else the Sikhs have little chance of a place under the sun. The preservation of their distinctive culture, tradition and language must be preserved in that. Therein lies the key to the future of the Sikhs. They cannot brook the idea of their culture, or themselves, being swallowed up. They seek the preservation of their cultural and linguistic entity, and to this end they demand a Punjabi-speaking province. This is the cure of the Sikh problem."

It was unfortunate, as the staff correspondent of "The Times India" pointed out, that the Central leadership refused to under-

easily avert now....” How one wishes such advice had come to be appreciated then.

Those were the days when preparations were being made for the General Elections that were to be held in 1952, and every party was doing its best to prepare for it. The Shiromani Akali Dal too prepared a manifesto in which the main plank of the programme was the creation of a Punjabi-speaking province. The salient portion in the election manifesto contained the following demands :

“The true test of democracy, in the opinion of the Shiromani Akali Dal, is that the minority should feel that they are really free and equal partners in the destiny of the country. To bring home this sense of freedom to the Sikhs, it is vital that a Punjabi-speaking province should be carved out from the different States of the country on the basis of the Punjabi language and culture. This will not only be in fulfilment of the pre-partition Congress programme and pledges, but also be in entire conformity with the universally recognised principles governing the formation of provinces. The Shiromani Akali Dal is in favour of the formation of provinces on a linguistic and cultural basis throughout India, but holds it as a question of life and death for the Sikhs that a new Punjab be created immediately.”

There is no doubt that the election in 1952 was fought on the basis of the Punjabi Suba. This is obvious from the fact that Pandit Nehru in his electioneering tour strongly opposed the creation of a Punjabi Suba, and named it to be a division of the country. Speaking at Patiala on the 4th January, 1952, when a few squatters in the meeting interrupted him during his speech by shouting out the slogans. “Le ke Rabenge Punjabi Suba”, Nehru declared, “I will not allow India to be divided again. I will not allow any further trouble. If there is any trouble in any part of India, I would put it down with all my strength.” How Nehru considered the demand for the creation of a linguistic State on the basis of Punjabi to be a division of the country like the one we had in 1947, was incomprehensible to the Sikhs, and added to the feeling of frustration and bitterness amongst them, that they were being

suspected and for that reason discriminated against. The results of the election of 1952 were a foregone conclusion inasmuch as it was known that the Hindus and the Harijans would all vote for the Congress and its programme of opposition to the creation of the Punjabi Suba. And the Sikhs, by and large, voted for the Akali Dal which stood for the creation of the Punjabi Suba. The result was that the Akali Dal was routed both in the Punjab and Pepsu in the General Elections of 1952. Hukam Singh, the then President of the Akali Dal attributed the defeat of the Akali Dal in the General Elections of 1952 to the division created by the Congress amongst the Hindus and Sikhs, and admitted that the Hindus had solidly voted against the Akali Dal candidates on account of the Punjabi Suba issue. He said, "But I want to tell the Congress leaders that the masses are determined to have a Punjabi-speaking province, and shall not rest on their oars, till they have achieved their objective. No amount of deception or double dealing, crookery or cajolery, intimidation or threats, promises of promotion or patronage can lead them astray. They have always stood and fought against heavy odds, and would not but remain true to their traditions. In this deepest crises of their history after the present engineered defeat, they have come to know their real friends and worst foes, and this is a great gain for a community in its fight for a self-respecting existence and citizenship." When asked if it is not a fact that the slogan of a Punjabi-speaking province alienated the Hindus, he did not deny it but said, "The formation of the Punjabi-speaking province is the most fundamental demand of the Sikhs. To give it up would have been nothing short of signing our own death warrants, and to postpone it would constitute opportunism and a clear violation of the sacred Sikh traditions of open fight and chaste policies."

Thereafter the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal passed the following resolution admitting defeat and giving the reasons thereof :

"The Akali Dal is convinced that the Sikhs are victims of the base communalism, and feel justified in continuing the struggle for achieving equality for the Sikhs. The Akali Dal

believes in constitutional methods and, therefore, directs all its energies to the achievement of its objectives by returning its tried representatives. The present results in the elections manoeuvred by dishonest methods, have shaken the faith of the community in the ballot box, but, even then, it has demonstrated that an overwhelming majority of the Sikhs stand behind the Akali Dal, and it has been able to secure justice for the outraged community. The Shiromani Akali Dal, therefore, feels encouraged and more determined than before to continue efforts by all methods, constitutional if possible, others if necessary, to achieve equality and justice for the Sikhs in the services and in all other walks of life, and to maintain its struggle for the Punjabi language."

There was no doubt that the Akali party as such had not fared well in the Pepsu area also, but it had not been so badly defeated there as in the Punjab; and the Congress party there could not secure a majority. Nevertheless, the authorities imposed a Congress Ministry in Pepsu, which was soon defeated, giving place to the United Front Ministry headed by Gian Singh Rarewala, which was sworn in on 20th April 1952. The manoeuvres of the Congress leadership in Pepsu further strengthened the impression of the Sikhs, that the Congress leadership was sparing no effort to keep the Sikhs out of power with the support of its stooges, who acted against Sikh interests. No sooner was the Ministry formed, than the Centre ruled by the Congress party started interference in its day to day working. It would be recalled that the United Front Ministry was the first non-Congress Ministry then in any State in India, and naturally it was difficult for the Congress, as an All India Body, to accept this position. Bhupinder Singh Man, a Minister in the Pepsu non-Congress Cabinet, in a press conference in October, 1952, recounted specific instances of the Central States Ministry's interference in the day-to-day administration of Pepsu. One specific instance of this interference that was patent and obvious was the fact that Gian Singh Rarewala wanted to consolidate the position of the United Front Ministry by taking a Harijan member as a Minister, but he was not permitted to do so. This manoeuvring by the Congress to defeat

the United Front Ministry produced reaction not only in the Sikhs, but it made even Dr. Ambedkar, in an exclusive interview granted to the special correspondent of the "Spokesman" on the 17th November, 1952, strongly deprecate the Central interference in Pepsu's administration. He announced that the Congress was violating the spirit of the Constitution of India for an unfair and highly objectionable purpose. Dr. Ambedkar said, "It was never intended for the purpose it is being used by the Congress dominated Centre." He further supported the demand of the Sikh minority by saying, "It is strange enough that the Hindu Congress Party, which is in power in the Centre only because of its numerical majority, condemns the down-trodden, ignored and injured minorities as communal, whenever they raise a cry against the aggressive communalism of the Centre. The days of discrimination are numbered, and the day is not far off when all the aggrieved and injured minorities of the country shall join hands to forge one common front against the aggressive communalism of the Hindu-dominated Congress." He welcomed the United Front Ministry of Pepsu, and said that all efforts of the Congress to dislodge the United Front non-Congress State Government shall be calculated breach of democratic conventions and of the tradition of fair play. Ours is but a copy of the American Constitution, he said, and hundreds of instances could be quoted when Democratic Party was in the White House, and the Republican Party controlling many States. Democracy does not mean that the whole country should be single coloured. He condemned the deep rooted corruption, and said, "it would be better if the Congress is wiped out without delay, otherwise corruption shall wipe out the Congress."

Events in Punjab also were driving the Sikhs to think thereafter on communal lines. The new cabinet, constituted by Bhim Sen Sachhar in May, 1952, did not observe the convention of keeping parity between the Hindus and Sikhs, which had been observed for some time after partition, and on which stress had been laid by the Sikh legislators. Bhim Sen Sachhar openly denounced such parity, and speaking in the Assembly on May, 1952, he said, "If parity means communalism, I will

not let it continue. I am glad that I have taken that decision, and have put an end to a wrong thing which had continued for some time." Sikh sentiments were getting hardened by these events. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee was in control of the so-called 'Nationalist' Sikhs headed by Jathedar Udham Singh Nagoke after partition, and this party was being kept in power by the ruling party in the State by all possible means. But the support for the Punjabi Suba cause became so intense that certain members of the S.G.P.C. broke away from this group and in the Annual Elections in October 1952, the Akali Dal's nominee, Pritam Singh Khuranj, got elected, thus giving the control of this major statutory body to the Akalis, who thereafter remained in control. It was the S.G.P.C. thereafter which played a major role in the body politic of the Punjab, headed by the Akali leadership. The election of the S.G.P.C. came to be the barometer of the strength and support of the Sikhs to the cause of the Punjabi Suba.

The President of the Shiromani Akali Dal, while addressing an All India Students Federation Conference in November, 1952, reiterated the stand of the Akali Dal in clear and unequivocal terms. He projected mainly three demands of the Sikhs :

"(a) That a Punjabi-speaking area be demarcated on a purely cultural and linguistic basis, so as to preserve the Punjabi language and culture ;

(b) A just and equal treatment of the scheduled castes and no distinction on account of religion ;

(c) Equal opportunities for all in public services."

Amplifying these demands and elucidating the stand of the Akali Dal, Master Tara Singh, the then undisputed and recognised leader of the Sikhs, said in his statement at Patna on the 30th December, 1952, "All that he demanded all these years was the creation of a Punjabi-speaking State by taking certain portions of the present Punjab and Pepsu and forming them into one administrative unit. He had been grossly misrepresented by certain sections of the press in the Punjab, who gave a communal tinge to this demand." Master Tara Singh further said, "That his proposal would foster peaceful Hindu and Sikh

relations, greater administrative efficiency, and better economy." The Akali leader, however, added that however ardently he might believe in the need for a Punjabi-speaking province, he would not press for it until the greater issue of Indo-Pakistan relations was solved once and for all. "I am not so foolish as to press for this demand when war clouds are gathering on the Indian horizon." How unfortunate was the position in the Punjab, that such unequivocal and patriotic stand by a Sikh leader was not properly understood, and the gulf between the Hindus and the Sikhs widened because of the emphasis by the Punjab Hindu press and leadership that conceding the demand for the creation of a Punjabi-speaking province spelt out the division of the country which would be detrimental to the interests of the country.

Hukam Singh, on the same day i.e., October 20, 1952, at Calcutta said the same thing, "The Sikhs stand for the redistribution of the present Punjab on a cultural and linguistic basis. We are opposed to a separate State for the Sikhs. The Sikhs are not getting a fair deal from the majority community." Elaborating his point, he characterised the attitude of the Hindus as queer, for they disowned their mother tongue in preference to Hindi. He added that while 89% of the Punjabis spoke the Punjabi language, the bulk of the Hindus in the census returns gave Hindi as their mother tongue. This was later proved incorrect, and in the census report the language question was ultimately dropped. According to Hukam Singh, 10 out of 13 districts were completely Punjabi-speaking areas. The proposed Punjabi-speaking State would comprise Pepsu, the Punjabi-speaking districts of the Punjab, and also the Punjabi area of Rajasthan.

The second demand of the Sikhs he said, was that there should be no distinction between the Hindu and the Sikh scheduled caste members. Unless the Sikh scheduled castes were given the same privileges along with the Hindu scheduled castes, they feared there might be conversion of the Sikh scheduled castes to Hinduism.

Their third demand, he said, was that some competent officer might be appointed to see that there was no discrimina-

tion, whatsoever, on grounds of religion in recruiting persons for the Government service.

The opposition of the Hindus to the demand for the Punjabi-speaking province was very aptly criticised by Om Parkash Kahl, a patriotic and well-meaning Punjabi, in an article which he contributed to the "Spokesman" in its issue of the 31st December, 1952. He wrote, among other things that, "the third category of Hindus, who oppose Punjabi and Gurmukhi is more outspoken and clear headed. They frankly admit that they speak Punjabi, and that the natural script of Punjabi is neither Arabic script nor Devanagri, but Gurmukhi. Their desire, however, is to become Hindi-speaking people in course of time. They make no secret of their dislike for their tongue, God had put in their mouth by mistake at the time of their birth and they are out to undo the wrong. The attitude of such people, however, anomalous, though it may be, is understandable. And we would have liked all Punjabi Hindus, who oppose Punjabi language, to be frank and outspoken like this, so that unnecessary playing on words and the subsequent confusion could be avoided. We need not go into the causes which impel certain Hindus to disown Punjabi. In the ultimate analysis, this attitude is bound to rest on anti-Sikh feelings though they try to rationalise it in a variety of ways. The majority of the non-Sikh Hindus especially the Arya Samajists, labour under the misconception that the propagation of Hindi is their religious duty... The Hindu opposition to Punjabi is thus traceable to communal factors though they do not admit it. Some of them argue that they want to sacrifice their mother tongue for the sake of national unity, as if they would have shown the same spirit of sacrifice if Sanskrit, the real symbol of Hindu unity, had been made the national language."

The demand for the creation of a State on a linguistic basis was not limited to the Sikhs in Northern India but was more or less wide-spread in the South. It would be recalled that the linguistic commission had been constituted in 1948 for the purpose, which had advised postponement of the consideration of the question. The J.V.P. Committee had also been formed

thereafter, but the movement for the creation of linguistic States had been intensified in the South. Rumulu had gone on hunger strike on the issue, and his consequent death in the cause of Andhra State focussed the attention of the whole country on the problem, compelling the Central Government to take steps towards the formation of Andhra Province. For this purpose, a one-man commission comprising Mr. Justice Wanchoo, was appointed to demarcate Andhra Province. The death of Shri Rumulu by fast had impact on the Sikhs as well, and the struggle for the creation of a Punjabi-speaking State was intensified. Sampuran Singh Ramman, the then President of the Pepsu Akali Dal, sought the permission of the President of the Shiromani Akali Dal to go on hunger strike on the lines of Shri Rumulu. In a statement to the press seeking such permission, he declared, "The Sikhs have all along sided with the Congress and have made overwhelming sacrifices for their motherland, but when the question of granting protection to the cultural traditions and language comes, the Congress not only refuses to honour its past pledges, but maligns the Sikh leaders as reactionaries and disruptive. The only way of getting justice from such a corrupt and hypocritical administration is to rouse the conscience of the people by making a personal sacrifice." Sampuran Singh Ramman did go on hunger strike, but was arrested later and lodged in Delhi Jail, forcibly fed for a long time, wherein his health got totally shattered.

The intensity of the Sikh feelings on the issue could be gauged from the fact, that an All Parties Sikh Convention was held in February, 1953, at Amritsar, presided over by Principal Teja Singh, a liberal and Nationalist Sikh and attended by other Sikh leaders, wherein Bhag Singh moved the main resolution which reflected the views of the Sikh intelligentsia then :

"That an impartial commission enjoying the full confidence of the Sikhs, be appointed to go into the whole question of appointments, promotions of and discrimination against the Sikhs in Civil and Military services. The convention was of the opinion that the Sikhs were being discriminated against in Civil and Military services and had a genuine grievance against the Government in power. The Sikhs in Military services were

not being treated fairly, and were being subjected to ridicule and calumny." In the course of his speech, Bhag Singh stated, that the Government was communal and wanted to undermine the strength and solidarity of the community. This convention was called to express the intense feelings of the Sikhs in regard to the discriminatory treatment being meted out to the Sikhs in the services, Civil and Military, for the reasons that with the increase in the intensity of the struggle by the Sikhs for the creation of a Punjabi speaking province, there was a greater reaction amongst the Hindus in high positions and those in authority wanted to oust the Sikhs from the services. This vicious circle was widening the gulf between the Hindus and the Sikhs and affecting the Sikh minority. The resolution was passed unanimously.

The events in Pepsu had complicated the situation further. The United Front Ministry was in power. It was headed by Gian Singh Rarewala as the Premier. It had the majority, and was running the administration, despite day-to-day interference from the Central States Ministry. Gian Singh Rarewala's election was set aside by the Election Tribunal in an election Petition, and this gave an opportunity to the States Ministry at the Centre to take up the matter, in spite of the fact that the United Front Party in Pepsu had a following of 27 out of 51 members and bye-elections from the two constituencies of of Nalagarh and Lehra Ghaga were due, and the United Front Party expected to bag these seats. The States Ministry recommended the President to assume powers, which was accordingly done, and the Constitution was suspended in Pepsu. This was a great shock to the Sikhs, whose convictions got confirmed that the Congress wanted to keep the Sikhs out of power, where they manage to capture it. The result of this suspension of the Constitution was that a huge demonstration was held at Patiala led by the ex-Minister Bhupinder Singh Man. It was demanded by the Sikhs, that, before the suspension of the constitution, the United Front Party should have been allowed to elect a new leader or Gian Singh Rarewala should have been allowed to continue to be the Chief Minister with the direction that he should get himself elected from

another constituency within a period of six months. But this was not done, and the President's rule was enforced in the only State where a non-Congress Ministry was functioning in a democratic manner, simply for the reason that its Chief Minister had been unseated in an election petition. The leadette of the "Spokesman" in its issue of the 16th March, 1953, on this reflected the Sikh point of view :

"The Congress never had any majority in Pepsu Assembly. Immediately after general elections they were installed by the Raj Parmukh though they did not deserve it. There was a hue and cry. The party could not carry through the first budget. They had to resign. The Raj Parmakh could not lend them undue support and incurred the odium of his masters. Since then he has been maligned, insulted and abused. He has been dubbed as an ally of the Akalis who were a red rag to the Congress bulls. Every effort has been made to displace him. We raised our voice because he is being made a victim of *communalism*. Otherwise we should not have much of sympathy with him, as he has done his best to placate his Congress bosses. This should be an eye-opener to every Sikh. A Sikh would be tolerated or encouraged for some time, but only so long as he could be exploited or used against the community's interests. As soon as that purpose has been served and he is not useful, he is to be thrown away as a waste rag. Sardar Baldev Singh served the purpose quite well at the time of the Wavell Conference. When the object was achieved, he was thrown in to the gutter. The Maharaja of Patiala played his part and defeated the machinations of the Nawab of Bhopal in moulding the decision of the Princes. Then he was the biggest patriot and Sardar Patel desired to become his subject. He was a nice man when he installed Congress opportunists in the saddle in spite of their being in minority. But as he failed to keep them there, and acted constitutionally, he is not needed then...."

The Akali Dal Working Committee also criticised the steps taken by the States' Ministry to suspend the constitution, when the United Front Party had the majority and could run the administration. They passed the following protest resolu-

tion :

"There is calculated design to suppress the Sikh community. It has withstood all vilifications and calumnies. The truth seems clear now, and everybody feels convinced that the Sikhs are not communalists but are the victims of communalism. They are groaning under the aggressive tyranny of the Congress majority. Now that the whole game stands exposed, the curtain has been drawn aside. The Congress has appeared in its true colours. This is an outright repression to do the thing unashamedly...." In the meantime Master Tara Singh was arrested for attending a meeting convened to commemorate the martyrdom day of Nankana Sahib tragedy for disobedience of the prohibitory order and was lodged in jail. This was his third arrest in free India.

The clamping of the President's rule in the Pepsu area, and suspension of the constitution despite the declaration by the United Front leadership that they commanded a majority, and the arrest of Master Tara Singh, had a very serious impact on the Sikhs, who felt that the Congress was out to wrest power from them by all means, constitutional or otherwise, and suppress them. This was confirmed by the way policies were pursued in Pepsu. The reins of the Government of Pepsu were entrusted to one Rao who was brought in as adviser, and entrusted with the duties of administering the State with a free hand to do whatever he pleased. His first act was the removal of the Sikh Chief Secretary and two Sikh Deputy Commissioners. All the changes that he brought about in the administration seemed to indicate that his objective was not only to remove the Sikhs from key posts, but also to eliminate the Sikh character of the State. The agitation by the Sikhs under the leadership of the Shiromani Akali Dal was intensified, and Rao's administration was subjected to bitter criticism. This became more pointed and bitter when it appeared that the administration was taking measures to manoeuvre and manage the postings in the key positions in order to give an unfair advantage to the Congress in the mid-term elections in the State. In this connection a demand began to be voiced by different parties. It began to be said openly in the Conference

and other public meetings of the Akali Dal, that the defection of Sampuran Singh Ramman, the then President of the Riasti Akali Dal, from the parent body, with his followers, was inspired by the Administrator and the Congress leaders. The Akali Dal leadership felt that in view of the defection of Sampuran Singh Ramman and triangular nature of the mid-term elections, the position of Shiromani Akali Dal would weaken, but there was no way out.

The situation in the Pepsu State got further electrified on the eve of the Mid-term Poll, when Nehru, the then President of the All India Congress Committee, was brought on the 27th December, 1953, by the State Congress leaders to address the congregation in the main hall of Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib, on the occasion of the anniversary of the martyrdom of two sons of the Tenth Guru. It was taken by the Sikhs to be an election stunt, and the Sikhs asserted that the Hall of the Gurdwara was not meant for such purpose. Master Tara Singh, who was present on the occasion, therefore, stood up and protested against Nehru's speech. In fact, he stopped him from speaking. There was a disturbance and the Sikhs did not allow Nehru to speak, despite all efforts made by the Maharaja of Patiala and other Congress leaders. This was taken to be an insult to the Prime Minister of India, and was taken as such by the Hindus. This again widened the rift between the two communities. In fact, Pandit Nehru had come to Patiala on that occasion not in the capacity of the Prime Minister of India, but in the position of the President of the Congress, which office he held at that time. He had come in connection with the mid-term poll, which had been announced. It was unfortunate that he had been misguided by the Congress leadership into attempting to make the Gurdwara an election platform, and at a time when a martyrdom day was being celebrated. It is possible, that he had no intention of making a political speech at that time; and he might have intended to pay tribute to the memory of the two martyrs who had been walled alive, but the Akalis saw his presence as connected with the electioneering programme and, as such, did not allow him to speak. This, as stated earlier, intensified the antipathy of

the Hindu leadership of the State against the Akalis. This fact, coupled with the situation that the Akali Dal had been split into two parts, with a part of the Akali Dal fighting against the parent body, resulted in the defeat of the Akali Dal nominees, - and a resounding victory for the Congress in the mid-term elections. These mid-term elections brought the Congress again into power. The Ministry was formed by the Congress, headed by Colonel Raghbir Singh, but the power was mainly in the hands of Brij Bhan.

The Government of India had announced the appointment of States Reorganisation Commission on the 22nd December, 1953, with the following scope of reference :

"The Commission will investigate the conditions of the problem, the historical background, the existing situation, and the bearing of all relevant important factors thereon. They will be free to consider any proposal relating to such reorganisation. The Government expect that the Commission would, in the first instance, not go into the details, but make recommendations in regard to the broad principles which would govern solutions to this problem, and if they so choose, the broad lines on which particular States should be reorganised and submit interim reports for the consideration of the Government."

The appointment of the Commission was welcomed by the Sikhs, as it gave them an opportunity to place their case for the Punjabi Suba, and get an adjudication thereon. But it also gave an opportunity to the communal section of the Punjab Hindus to claim that a Maha Punjab be created by merging Pepsu in the Punjab, and enlarging Punjab by amalgamating it with Himachal Pradesh. This reactionary movement appealed to the Hindus, and mobilised them in its support. They began to feel that their counter move would at least put an end to the movement in support of the Punjabi Suba. The two wings of the Congress both in the Punjab and Pepsu, began siding with and giving support to this counter move. The Commission had invited memorandum from the public, individually and collectively by its announcement on 23rd February 1954, but they laid down : "That the Commission

PUNJABI SUBA

5 Ludhiana	98 5	96 3
6 Hoshiarpur	99 9	97 7

In Ambala district only two tehsils i.e., Rupa and Kharar, were predominantly Punjabi speaking. But after the partition, due to the migration of Hindustani speaking Muslims of this district to Pakistan and the rehabilitation of Punjabi speaking refugees in their place, the whole district has become predominantly Punjabi speaking.

So far as Hissar district is concerned, its tehsils of Bhiwani, Hansi and Hissar, excluding sub-tehsil of Tohana, are Hindustani speaking but tehsils Sirsa, Fatehabad and sub-tehsil Tohana are Punjabi speaking. They have become more so after the replacement of the Muslim population by the Hindu Sikh population of West Punjab whose language is Punjabi. The same is the case with Karnal, Thanesar and Ka thal Tehsils of Karnal district.

In Pepsu, the following districts have always been predominantly Punjabi speaking

- 1 Patiala
- 2 Barnala
- 3 Bhatinda
- 4 Fatehgarh Sahib
- 5 Kapurthala
- 6 Sangrur (except Jind and Narwana tehsils)

These districts were demarcated after the merger of the States into the Union, but the population of these areas according to census reports from 1891 to 1931 has remained predominantly Punjabi speaking (at least 80%.)

Of Rajasthan Ganga Nagar colony is a predominantly Punjabi speaking area. This is because the colonists who have settled there are mainly Punjabis and they have carried their language and their culture with them. This district is situated to the West of the Ghaggar river, the old boundary line of the Punjabi speaking area, and is contiguous to the Ferozepore and Hissar districts of the Punjab State. Thus, the proposed Punjabi speaking province should consist of the areas of the Punjab, Pepsu and Rajasthan as enumerated above.

Grearson in his 'Linguistic Survey of India' pointed out

PUNJABI SUBA CONCEIVED

that the part of the Punjab to the West of the Ghaggar river is Punjabi-speaking. That holds good even to-day, except for the fact that the East Ghaggar portion of Ambala district and Kaithal,--Karnal and Thanesar Tehsils of Karnal district and the East Ghaggar portion of Sirsa, Fatehabad and Tohana tehsils of Hissar district have, as a result of the replacement of the Muslim population of these areas by the Hindus and Sikhs of West Punjab, become predominantly Punjabi-speaking. C.F. Map of the Punjab showing distribution of different languages in 1891 published against p. 261 of Census Report of Vol. XIX.

The proposed Punjabi-speaking province will have a population of about 12 millions according to the following details :—

PUNJAB

Name of the district	Areas in Sq. miles	Population according to 1931 census report.
1. Gurdaspur	1366	851294
2. Amritsar	1942	1367040
3. Ferozepore	4107	1326520
4. Ludhiana	1279	808105
5. Jullundur	1331	1055600
6. Hoshiarpur	2227	1091986
7. Ambala	2019	943734
8. Karnal (except Panipat tehsil)	2636	852741
9. Hissar (Sirsa, Fatehabad & Thana Tohana)	2773	410992
Total	19680	8708012

PEPSU

1. Patiala	1590	524269
2. Barnala	1304	536728
3. Bhatinda	2313	666809
4. Kapurthala	631	295071

PUNJABI SUBA

5 Fatehgarh Sahib	826	237397
6. Sangrur (except Jind and Narwana tehsils)	889	303305
Total	<u>7553</u>	<u>2563579</u>

RAJASTHAN

Ganganagar district	8225	631130
Punjab	19680	8708018
Pepsu	7553	2563579
Ganganagar	8225	630130
Total	<u>35458</u>	<u>11901727*</u>

Besides the memoranda of the Shiromani Akali Dal, the Arya Samaj, the Jan Sangh, the Punjab Government and the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee and many individuals had also submitted memorandas. The Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee and the Punjab Government under Partap Singh Kairon, supported the proposal of the integration of the three States, Punjab, Pepsu and Himachal Pradesh, a proposal identical with the demand for Maha Punjab minus Delhi. It was surprising indeed that the Punjab State Congress and the Punjab Government ruled by the Congress should have deviated so much from the basic stand of the All India Congress Committee in its many resolutions from 1917 onwards, that the reorganisation of the States should be on a linguistic basis. What made the case of Punjab an exception was incomprehensible, unless it was for two reasons: firstly, to please the *Hindu communalists*, and seek their support, and remain in power, secondly, to keep the situation tense in the State so as to rule it strongly. This was a characteristic trait of Partap Singh Kairon, who headed the Punjab Government. It was in March, 1956, when the draft of the States Reorganisation Bill as it emerged came before the Punjab Vidhan Sabha that Harkishan Singh Surjit, a Communist M.L.A., correctly exposed the attitude of the Punjab Government and the Pradesh

Congress Committee. He said in a speech, "so far as the problem of the Punjab is concerned, its future set-up has not been drawn on linguistic basis in spite of the fact that the All India National Congress stood committed to organise the States on its basis. In this connection, the Government of Punjab submitted a memoranda to the States Organisation Committee supporting the formation of a State, which was of the likening of a communal organisation. This memorandum was quite similar to the memorandum submitted by communal organisations. In both the memoranda it was desired that the State of Punjab should not be organised on a linguistic basis but it should be a Maha Punjab, constituting an area, the people of which were never willing to join together. The State Government and the communal-minded Hindus of the State wanted to tie together unwilling parties under compulsion in Maha Punjab so that the tension might continue to exist in the State."

The States Reorganisation Commission toured the country, and considered the question of the reorganisation of the States on a linguistic basis but events in the Punjab were heading towards a serious crisis. The elections to the S.G.P.C. were to be held in early 1955, and the Akali Dal had entered the contest on the Punjabi Suba basis. The Congress, too, organised a Khalsa Dal, a separate organisation with a view to enter the arena for election and fight the S.G.P.C. elections on the same issue. The Congress utilised all official machinery for the purpose of elections, but the masses gave an unequivocal verdict. Never in the history of elections, has a party in power been so utterly routed as was the fate of the Congress baptised Khalsa Dal. The Khalsa Dal contested 132 seats and won only 3. The Shiromani Akali Dal contested 112 seats and won all. This success raised the morale of the Sikhs, proving that, at least there was unanimity in the Sikhs supporting the Punjabi Suba.

The success of the Shiromani Akali Dal in the S.G.P.C. elections had its impact on the administration also. The S.G.P.C. had certain grievances, about some appointments to the Judicial Commission under the Gurdwara Act. Therefore,

Master Tara Singh met the Chief Minister in that connection on the latter's invitation. He explained that the convention provided that such appointments be out of the panel given by the S.G.P.C. During the discussions in regard to the Sikh position in the Punjab set-up, Master Tara Singh asserted, that all that the Sikhs sought was an honourable existence in free India and explained his view point. This was exploited by Chief Minister Sachhar, and certain words used by him so separated of context were publicised to show that Master Tara Singh wanted a Sikh State. Perhaps this interview was arranged only in order to utilise it for the purpose of propaganda. An excuse was found to say that the circumstances called for a ban on the slogan of the Punjabi Suba, in view of the stand taken by Master Tara Singh about the nature of the Punjabi Suba. Accordingly, an order was promulgated on the 6th April 1955, to the following effect by the District Magistrate of Amritsar :

"Whereas it has been made to appear to me that public order will be endangered by (a) the shouting or display of slogans such as (i) Punjab (or Maha Punjab) Suba Leke Rahenge (ii) Maha Punjab (or Punjabi Suba) Amar Rahe or Zindabad or Murdabad, (iii) Sene wich goli khanwange Punjabi Suba (or Maha Punjab) Banawange...." Therefore the shouting of such slogans was prohibited under section 144 Cr P.C.

This was felt to be a great insult by the Akali Dal that such a prohibition be imposed on the free expression and shouting of the slogans. Therefore, the Shiromani Akali Dal adopted a resolution, in its meeting at Amritsar on 24th April 1955, that they would launch a peaceful satyagraha to establish their right to raise a slogan of Punjabi Suba Zindabad, unless the order was withdrawn by 10th May, 1955. The Shiromani Akali Dal also announced that they had no objection to the other party having a free expression and raising slogans of Maha Punjab Suba.

The ban was not lifted, and accordingly, Master Tara Singh along with 10 others courted arrest on the 10th May, 1955, by raising the slogan, and thus defying the ban. The statement

that he issued on the eve of his arrest was :

"I admit that the ban on the processions and the public meetings may be justified, and even essential on certain occasions, though I do not think such a ban is needed in Amritsar and other places at present,

"The morcha is only to secure the right of peaceful agitation in the form of shouting slogans to secure a Punjabi-speaking State and other linguistic States. My minimum and maximum demand is a Punjabi-speaking State. The Punjabi-speaking State will comprise those parts of the country where the majority of the people speak Punjabi. No efforts should be made to artificially decrease or increase its size. Such efforts will only add to the complication existing in the country. This Punjabi-speaking State shall, of course, be within the Indian Union, and within the framework of Indian constitution.

"All the reasons in favour of the creation of any other linguistic State hold good in case of the Punjabi-speaking State. Also there is a strong additional reason in favour of a Punjabi-speaking State that the Sikhs will be satisfied. The additional reason justifies the creation of the State even when no other linguistic State is created.

"I am fully convinced that the present tension between the Sikhs and the urbanite Hindus of Jullundur division will cease as soon as the Punjabi-speaking State is created. The present anti-Sikh attitude of the urbanite Punjabi Hindus, led by the Arya Samaj and the Congress, is unnatural, and will cease to exist as soon as encouragement by the Government is withdrawn.

"The fundamental cultural and social relations of the Sikhs and Hindus are so deep that they will always live as twin brothers. The present artificial tension could not last long.

"I state now, as I have done so many times before, that we Sikhs have never objected and shall never object to the slogan of 'Maha Punjab Zindabad'. Why then, has this slogan been banned? Is it not clear that this ban against Maha Punjab is simply to create a justification to stop the slogan of 'Punjabi Suba Zindabad'?"

References and Notes

- 1 "The Sikhs" by Khushwant Singh, p. 185.
- 2 "The Tribune" 19th July, 1950.
- 3 Ibid, 6th September, 1950.
4. Ibid, 15th October, 1950.
5. Ibid, 16th December, 1950.
6. "Sunday Observer" 19th November, 1950.
7. "Spokesman" 19th November, 1952.

the incidents of July 4, 1955, and protested against: "The sad unprovoked, illegal, sacrilegious and uncalled for acts of the Punjab Government and its officers", and demanded that such a problem be entrusted to a Judge, failing which the S.G.P.C. itself would appoint a committee for the purpose of the probe comprising Sardar Bahadur Sardar Teja Singh, retired Chief Justice of the Pepsu High Court, Kanwar Dalip Singh and Sardar Jodh Singh. The S.G.P.C. further listed the following specific acts of sacrilege for reference in the judicial probe:

1. Firing tear gas shells and throwing brickbats on the pilgrims in the Parkarma of Sri Darbar Sahib at Amritsar which, besides injuring many persons, affected seriously the carrying on of religious worship and functions in the Golden Temple itself.

2. Arrest of the Head Ministers and other Ministers of Sri Darbar Sahib.

3. Occupying and assuming superintendence over Gurdwara Manji Sahib, and prohibiting thereby the holding of religious congregations, which for a long time had been regularly held there.

4. Violating the sanctity of the Gurdwara Manji Sahib by entering it with shoes on and playing cards there.

5. Closing the main gate of the entrance to Sri Darbar Sahib from the Gurdwara Manji Sahib side.

6. Occupying and assuming superintendence over the Guru Ram Das Niwas, after arresting the pilgrims staying there and further disallowing the fresh pilgrims to stay there.

7. Breaking open the gate and the almirah of Dewan Asthan Hall and taking away of the diary there which could be used only in religious gatherings.

8. Climbing by the police on the Guru Ram Dass Langar, Gurdwara Panj Patshahi and Dewan Hall with shoes on.

9. Committing sacrilegious acts by entering Samadhi Bawa Attal Sahib with uniforms and lathis.

10. Snatching away the cooked meals being brought by the women pilgrims from Guru Ka Langar and insulting and arresting those who resisted this in any form."

It was reported on the 17th July, 1955, that Hukam Singh who had returned by that time from tour abroad met the Prime Minister and the Home Minister. The Chief Minister invited the S.G.P.C. representatives to meet him on September 10, 1955 at Chandigarh to discuss with him the question of the sacrilege and the listed grievances. Then a deputation, headed by Gian Singh Rarewala, waited on him and acquainted him with the grievances. Nothing, however, came of this, and Master Tara Singh in a statement to the press on the 20th September 1955, declared that until the Punjab Government made amends for the July 4, incident, when police had violated the religious places, the Sikhs would not rest. Thereafter, Chief Minister Sachhar came to the Akal Takhat and, in an open gathering, apologised on behalf of the Government for the sacrilegious acts that had been committed on July 4, which closed the chapter.

It will, however, be recalled that even the application of the Sachhar Formula in 1949 had been opposed by Hindu educational institutions, and it was not being implemented otherwise too. One of the grievances of the Sikhs was that even the Sachhar Formula had not been fully acted upon. Chief Minister Sachhar felt that the Sikh complaints were justified, and admitted, in a statement on the 5th October, 1955, that it had not been properly implemented and the reasons given were that "The Sachhar Formula was based on the recommendations of the committee appointed by the Oriental Arts, Science and Educational Faculty of the Punjab University and the Congress Working Committee resolution." He explained in detail how the committee formed by the University unanimously recommended that, as it had been made obligatory on every candidate for the matriculation examination to take a compulsory paper in Hindi in the Devanagiri script, and Punjabi in Gurmukhi script, both Hindi and Punjabi should be permitted as mediums of instruction and examination. He said that some of these leaders were most vocal in championing the cause of Hindi administratively of the University Committee. It was the state had been run recommendation on the 6th June, 1949, and The Commission

raised a hue and cry that Hindu interests were being jeopardised." Referring to the campaign launched by various organisations for getting Hindi recorded incorrectly as mother tongue during the last census, the Chief Minister said: "It is a very sorry state of affairs when we try to conceal the truth," and added, "What can be the future of such a land whose enlightened citizens behave in this manner?" He also admitted that in the Special Committee of the University, "Sikh members even offered that Punjabi be a regional language and may be written either in Devanagari or Gurmukhi script, but this offer, too, was rejected by those very members and the Sikhs walked out of the meeting. They then unanimously adopted the original resolution. Did it become these leaders to chase the Government with lathis, when it was simply implementing a recommendation accepted by it in October, 1949. I am implementing an old decision. This is not a new decision by me, or being thrust forward by me. I am simply getting implemented a decree made in accordance with the University Committee recommendations and the Congress Working Committee resolution." Referring to the demand of some people that if Punjabi could be written in Persian script before the partition, why should it not be written in Devanagari now? Shri Sachhar said, "that was out of slavish mentality. With the dawn of freedom, we must discard those old rotten tendencies and reorientate our outlook." He pleaded that the 55 lakh Indians in the Punjab and Pepsu with one voice had accepted that Punjabi be written in Gurmukhi script. He wanted them to act like a conscious majority, thoughtful of the minority rights that could be a real asset to the country. He added, "Let us for the sake of cordiality, love and eternal happiness that mark the relations of two communities since the inception of Sikh faith, show them a gesture of goodwill and win their hearts. After all, they are a part and parcel of our community. But if some Congress workers cannot accept the Sachhar Formula our Sahib with calculated recommendations of certain Committees

10. Snatching academic considerations, they may resign from the women pilgrims dress and join the Sangh or the R.S.S." arresting those who resist admission made six years after the applica-

tion of the Sachhar Formula, by the then Chief Minister giving the background of the Sachhar Formula, and the difficulties that the Punjab Government had had to face in the Punjab in its implementation, however imperfect and unjust it was to the Punjabi language. There was no doubt about the sincerity of Chief Minister Sachhar, and the sympathy that he had for a just cause. But he was surrounded by forces, that would not allow him to take the right steps. He had been forced to put a ban on the shouting of the Punjabi Suba slogans by his colleagues in the cabinet, and under their pressure, he took strong and stringent measures to face the satyagraha movement, but he found it impossible to cope with the wave of indignation that they had generated in the entire Sikh community. It was in such circumstances that he lifted the ban, and made the noble gesture of apologising for the sacrilegious acts of the Government minions. This public apology had its reaction amongst the communal Hindu members of the cabinet and the communal-minded Hindu M.L.As. This was exploited by Partap Singh Kairon, the then Revenue Minister in the Sachhar Cabinet, who canvassing for such sentiments amongst the Hindu members, condemned the leniency shown by Chief Minister Sachhar, and thereby secured support of these members. This enabled him to oust Chief Minister Sachhar and capture the Chief Ministership of the Punjab. Partap Singh Kairon, though no doubt a man of dynamic personality with drive and force, was most unscrupulous both in means and ends. He was to rule the Punjab for the next 8 years.

But bigger events had happened. The States Reorganisation Committee's Report was published in October, 1955, rejecting the Sikh demand for the Punjabi-speaking State, and recommending the creation of a Maha Punjab by the amalgamation of the Punjab, Pepsu and Himchal Pradesh areas. The Commission in its report, conceded that agitation of things in the proposed Punjabi State had resulted in the rise of communal passions in the area, with the support of the Sikhs as it section of the Hindu community had repudiated administratively language as their mother tongue. The State had been run authorities to abandon separate language. The Commission

Punjabi-speaking people in the census operations of 1951. The Commission also accepted that a large section had strongly opposed the creation of the Punjabi-speaking State, and it was for this reason that unanimous support to such a creation was lacking. It was most unfortunate that the Commission was actuated by considerations, not actually non-communal, which is shown in para 575 of the Report, when incorrect version was given of the reasons for the demand of the creation of a Punjabi-speaking State. The Report stated: "From the point of view of the Sikhs themselves, the solution that we propose offers the advantage that the precarious or uncertain political majority which they seek will be exchanged for the real and substantial rights which a sizable and vigorous minority with a population ratio of nearly 1/3rd is bound to have in the united Punjab in the whole of which they have a real stake." It is not understood how the Commission arrived at the finding that the Shiromani Akali Dal or any organisation representing the Sikhs had demanded an area of a 'precarious or uncertain political majority'. In fact the Akali Dal memorandum submitted to it sought merger of the Pepsu area with a majority Sikh population (according to Commission, 49%) to an area of Punjabi-speaking Punjab which would have brought Sikh percentage to only 40%. This finding, therefore, spelled the prejudiced mind of the Commission, which made it reject the demand for a Punjabi-speaking State. The approach of the Commission to the problem was otherwise also not realistic, for the reason that it had accepted the fact of a disowning of the mother tongue by a large section of the people, it should have held that the opposition was communal and not justified. The argument that even the creation of the Punjabi-speaking State would still make such State bilingual, inasmuch as the new proposed State would have to provide facilities for the instruction of all, they are on the primary stage in their mother tongue some Congress workers.

Resolution of the Central Advisory Board on 10. Snatching a territory proposed Punjabi-speaking area there could be the women pilgrims from the majority as such when it was conceded that arresting those who resist administration of the mother tongue on account

of communal reasons ; and secondly, that grant of educational facilities where 40 pupils speaking a language demanded education therein, did not weaken the strength of the case for the creation of a Punjabi-speaking area when such formula would be applicable to all States alike. Therefore, it was incorrect that the creation of a Punjabi-speaking State would not have solved the language problem, when the controversy was artificial. The Commission should have also appreciated, while using the argument in support of its findings that the Dhar Commission had expressed the view that no linguistic State should be imposed on substantial minorities, that that view had been rejected when linguistic States in other parts of the country had been created ; and secondly, there was to be no substantial minority speaking some other language. The Commission's approach was wrong too when it admitted that, "In recent years moreove, with the large influx of Punjabi-speaking people from Western Punjab into all the districts of the State, the line of demarcation between the Punjabi and the Hindi-speaking area has been further blurred," and then used the argument that the line between Western Hindi spoken in the Hindi speaking area of the Punjab and Punjabi could be taken as the meridian passing through Sirhind according to Grierson. It was for this reason that the Sikhs, through the Shiromani Akali Dal, demanded the extension of the line of demarcation up to Tehsil Panipat, where the population had become over whelmingly Punjabi-speaking. Yet this aspect was taken into consideration for the purpose of rejecting the claim. The other finding that the case for the Punjabi-speaking State fell because it lacked the general support of the poeple inhabiting the area, and it would not eliminate any of the causes of friction, was not tenable. It should have been appreciated that the cause of friction was motivated by communal considerations, admittedly unreasonable and unjust in the context of things. The Commission did not feel the least compunction in recommending the merger of Pepsu, the 'Homeland' of the Sikhs as it called it, simply for the reason that it was not administratively viable, when it was not denied that the State had been run administratively and efficiently for so long. The Commission

had the audacity to state that the Sikh percentage in the proposed enlarged State would show a small improvement of little more than 1.5 so far as the Punjab was concerned, that in the entire area the percentage would fall from 51% in Pepsu to 20% in the proposed State when it recommended the merger of Himachal Pradesh with Punjab. The irony in the recommendation was that it recommended the merger of Himachal Pradesh with the Punjab and Pepsu, making out a case for the creation of the Maha Punjab, without even considering that culturally and linguistically, the people of Himachal Pradesh were differently situated. The Commission had been empowered to organise the States not on the basis of administrative convenience only, for that was the sole consideration, when the Britishers had already demarcated the States, but it was to bear in mind certain important relevant factors such as ethnic and linguistic homogeneity and historical traditions. In these areas, there was nothing common between Himachal Pradesh and the Punjab except, of course, the catchment area of the Sutlej and the Beas, which is economically linked with the Bhakra project; but this was not the consideration governing three main factors for the purpose of reorganising the States. The Commission safely forgot that, in the resolution of the Ministry of Home Affairs dated 29th December, 1953, it had been specifically laid down in para 4; "That the language and culture of an area have an undoubted importance as they represent a pattern of living which is common in that area." None of the considerations provided in the scope of reference, whether preservation and strengthening the unity and security of India nor financial, economic and administrative matters, compelled a merger of Himachal Pradesh with Punjab when, linguistically and culturally, it definitely provided a pattern different and distinct from that of the Punjab. The Commission had admitted that the important section of the Sikh Community seemed to have a sense of grievance and sought their redress in a Punjabi-speaking State of their conception. It also admitted that one of the complaints was that the Sachhar-Giani Formula itself had not been implemented effectively, despite the fact, that the formula had the support of all the political parties of the Punjab.

ature at the time of its adoption. The Commission did not controvert the correctness of this complaint in that regard, though recommended that the Sachhar Formula should be worked in the right spirit, but it did not deal with the question, whether the formation of a Punjabi-speaking State would satisfy minority community.

The publication of the report came as a terrible shock to the Sikhs, and Master Tara Singh, the then President of the Shiromani Akali Dal, reacted strongly to it and made the following appeal to the Sikhs, which reflected the deep distress of the community. He said, "Dear Sikh brethren, today we are faced with a calamity that is bound to finish us. The present stage is to do or die. Set aside all ponderings, and let there be no wavering or indecision. It is the time for immolation to death, the symbol of sacrifice that has been picked. This is the time when all resources shall have to be exhausted, all efforts made, and all sacrifices undergone. Oh Sikhs ! in whatever corner of the world you may be residing, in Punjab, in Pepsu, in any other State in India or outside, get alert, remember Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the true Lord, and repeat Shri Waheguru and pray for his mercy and bountifulness to grant success to the Panth and protect us from all dangers." His appeal was pathetic. He called a convention of all parties and organisations of the Sikhs for the 11th October, 1955, at Amritsar. The conference was very well attended. It was a gathering of about 1300 people, representing all walks of life in the Punjab. The main resolution passed was :

"Whereas the Sikhs, as one of the three major parties gave l^{la} and unstinted support to the Congress at the critical and an^{an} cial stage in 1946-47 in Indian history, and threw in their no^{no} with India, on the assurance that their legitimate interests of^{of} would be safeguarded, and free India would provide them full te^{te} opportunity to grow and prosper, and ;

Whereas after independence they have felt that, despite their cooperation, they have been treated not only unfairly, but they have been discriminated against in all walks of life by the communal-minded majority of the Punjab. Furthermore, a

calculated campaign of calumny and vilification has been carried on against them, endangering their very existence as a cultural and religious minority. Therefore, the Shiromani Akali Dal finding the position of the Sikhs steadily deteriorating in all respects, pleaded for the formation of a Punjabi-speaking State, a solution in consonance with the principles and professions of the Congress, expecting that this would be conducive to their consolidation and amelioration in the new State, and remove the danger of communal aggressiveness and;

Whereas such a solution is not only democratic and secular, but in accordance with the eternally recognised principle that it is the minority which is the best judge of whether it feels secure under a particular set-up;

Now, therefore, this convention of the Sikhs views with alarm and great resentment the complete and callous rejection by the States Reorganisation Committee of the just and reasonable demand for the Punjabi-speaking State. The Commission has gone further and aggravated the wrong done by them by attacking the already established and officially recognised independent distinct existence and position of the Punjabi language and the Gurmukhi script, and has destroyed the position of the Punjabi language in the Pepsu, and has even overthrown the Government policy of the Punjab based on the Sachhar Formula subscribed by Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel. Not only this, the Commission has done exactly what a thorough partisan in the complicated situation of the Punjab would want it. They have gone out of their way to create and make Punjab in order to overwhelm the minorities whether religious or cultural. So far as the Sikhs are concerned, they want security and a sense of freedom from aggressive communalism, but the Commission, instead of giving them any relief, has obliterated Pepsu, the only limited area, where the Sikhs could possibly have some voice, and which, in the words of Sardar Patel, was the 'Homeland' of the Sikhs. This the Commission has done in the face of a truth and reality, which they themselves acknowledged when they said, "Before we conclude, we wish to emphasise that no guarantees can secure a

minority against every kind of discriminatory policy of a State Government or Government acting at State level which affects virtually every sphere of persons, hence a democratic Government must reflect the moral and political standard of the people. Therefore, if the dominant group is hostile to the minorities, the lot of the minorities is bound to become unenviable. There can be no substitute for a sense of fair play on the part of the majority and a corresponding obligation on the part of the minority to set themselves as elements vital to the integrated and ordered progress of the State.

In respect of Punjab it is an obvious and admitted fact that the dominant group is aggressively hostile to the Sikh minority and, according to the Commission's above admission no safeguards can be sufficient to the minority. The Commission has blindly and arrogantly rejected the remedies suggested by the Sikhs without itself suggesting satisfactory solution. The simplest solution, therefore, was to form a State based on the integration of officially recognised and demarcated Punjabi-speaking areas of the Punjab and Pepsu. The Commission has deliberately and purposely worsened the position by creating more problems and complications through its scheme of Maha Punjab.

The Commission has thought it fit to throw all principles to the winds and to forget all history. The apprehensions of the Sikhs concerning the Commission have proved to be true. The position of the Sikhs is completely honourable and consistent. They never committed themselves to abide by the recommendations of the Commission.

The Commission has utterly failed to do justice to the Sikhs, and has, rather delivered the Sikhs bound hand and foot to the slavery of an aggressively communal dominant group. Therefore, this convention calls upon the Government of India, whose responsibility is to protect the minorities and inspire a sense of security and freedom in their minds, to disregard the recommendation of the Commission concerning the North Western Zone, and to devise ways and means for the creation of the Punjabi-speaking Zone of the Punjab and Pepsu for conceding full satisfaction to the people of Himachal

and Haryana. The convention authorises the President to take suitable steps for conveying the views and sentiments of the Sikh community, to the Government of India and urging them to do their duty to the Sikhs."

As resolved in the last para of the Resolution of the Convention, Master Tara Singh led a deputation comprising himself as President of the Shiromani Akali Dal, Bhai Jodh Singh as representative of the Chief Khalsa Dewan, Gian Singh Rarewala, Giani Kartar Singh and Hukam Singh, to meet the Prime Minister on the 24th October, 1955, as arranged. Accordingly the deputation met and had two hours' discussion about the grievances of the Sikhs, during which meeting Maulana Azad and Pandit Pant were also present. The Punjab Congress leadership, too, felt that the States Reorganisation Committee Report had a very serious impact on the Sikhs, particularly since the Sachhar Formula had not been fully implemented, and no steps had been taken in regard to the development of Punjabi. Therefore, they also arranged a seven-man deputation comprising three Sikh Ministers, representing Punjab and Pepsu, and four other representatives, one was from the backward classes, one from Namdharis, and two from the Khalsa Dal to meet the Punjab Chief Minister and demand the speedy redress of Sikh grievances in order to 'ensure the growth of Punjabi as a regional language'. It was suggested that the Pepsu Formula whereby Punjabi in Gurmukhi script is the compulsory medium of instruction up to the 4th standard, be enforced throughout the Punjabi-speaking Area. The other demand of the deputation was to get the guarantee of numerical parity between the Sikhs and non-Sikhs in the Punjab Cabinet, a rotation in the Chairmanship of the Public Service Commission, equal treatment to the Sikh backward classes, and some minor grievances. The matter was, however, approaching a climax since the Punjab Congress had announced the holding of the Tenth All India Congress Session at Amritsar at the end of December, 1955. The Shiromani Akali Dal also declared that they would be holding their conference on the same days at Amritsar. Simultaneously an announcement was made by the Arya Samaj leadership that they would hold

their Maha Punjab Conference at Amritsar in those very days. In view of this tension, Master Tara Singh arranged the venue of the Akali Conference at a place where there could be no possibility of any conflict either with the Congress workers or with the Arya Samaj workers.

The procession that preceded the holding of the Akali Conference was historic. Principal Teja Singh giving a description of it in the columns of the "Spokesman" of the 11th February, 1956 said : "While standing by the road-side near the Shabeed Nagar, I saw a sight which has thrilled me to the core. It seemed as if the whole Sikh nation had turned out. All those who were able-bodied men and women had come from all the quarters of the Punjab, and even beyond, and were on the road. There are about 50 lakh Sikhs, all told. Excluding old persons, children and the disabled and the sick, there might be 20 lakhs in all. Out of these at least 5 lakhs had come to join the procession.... I am reminded of two occasions in history, when a similar concourse of people are said to have massed themselves together. I thought of Xerxes, who led his cohorts of Persians to invade Greece. He got erected a marble throne on the shores of the Bosphorous, from which he witnessed the march of his soldiers. They were so numerous that he could not count them. He built huge walled enclosures, each capable of holding 50,000 men. He ordered his men to fill the enclaves. In this way he was able to estimate the numbers. When all were marshalled before him, his eyes were filled with tears. The other such occasions, were when Alexander and Timur, at the head of huge armies marched into India to conquer the country." He concluded : "Shall they have to march on ?" These words of Principal Teja Singh were prophetic, and, the Sikhs have still to march.

Another apt description of this historic procession was given by Brecher, the author of "Nehru, A political Biography" :

"On a bright, cool, North Indian winter morning, the contending groups massed their forces in a show of strength especially for the benefit of the Congress High Command which was camped close by, first came the Sikhs, in the most impres-

sive and peaceful demonstration I have ever seen. Hour after hour, mile after mile, they marched, eight abreast, down the main streets of Amritsar, a hallowed name in the Indian Nationalism because of the shooting in 1919. Old and young, men and women, they came on in endless streams, mostly with an expression of determination and sadness in their eyes, many still remembering the ghastly days of 1947, when their homeland was cut into two and hundreds and thousands of their coreligionists died or were maimed. What strength there was in the appearance of the old men, who with flowing beards, looked like the Hebrew prophets of old. Many carried their traditional swords, kirpans, and many wore blue turbans, a symbol of militancy (the dyers in the city did a handsome business this week). They had come from the villages and towns of the Punjab, and from far off places as well. Almost without exception, they marched in orderly file, portraying their unity of purpose. At intervals came the resounding cry, 'Punjabi Suba Zindabad' (Long live Punjabi Suba) and 'Master Tara Singh Zindabad' with intermittent musings to enliven the procession. On they came for five hours. None who watched them could doubt their genuine fear of being swallowed up in a vice-like embrace of rabid Hinduism. At conservative estimate, they numbered over one lakh. To this observer, it seemed more than double that figure."¹

The historic procession reflected the intensity of feelings prevalent among the Sikhs throughout the Punjab and beyond on the issue. Brecher writes that this had impressed Prime Minister Nehru: "Nehru was sympathetic to Sikh fears but was reported by friends to be under strong pressure from communal minded Hindu Congressmen who were not prepared to place the Punjabi Hindus in an inferior political position."

Master Tara Singh's address on the occasion of the Conference was very significant. He said, "It appears to me that the exact moment of our trial has arrived. We must rise and attract the attention of the people of the world to our noble principles, or die as traitors to our Gururs. This is the most critical moment (at least in our country) to make a desperate

effort to save the country from this threatening disease which needs immediate and desperate remedy. I can suggest no definite remedy in my present position, for my suggestion at this moment may be misunderstood and misinterpreted. I am bound hand and foot and some of my Punjabi Hindu brothers insist upon keeping us in our present bondage. They do not want to give us the advantage of the freedom which they have gained. They do not trust us, and I do not know how to gain their confidence. A most complicated and dangerous situation is facing us, but we are not realising it. Oh my brethren, rise in time lest we should be too late. I cry for Hindu-Sikh unity and some Punjabi Hindu spokesmen reply that unity could be attained by me only if we submit. I cry for equality, brotherhood and unity, and they offer me slavery and death....

"I again come to the point and appeal to the Hindu brethren in the name of common culture and religious heritage, in the name of our common forefathers, in the name of the catholicity of the Hindus, and in the name of the great Gurus, Tegh Bahadur and Gobind Singh, and in the name of the minor sons of Guru Gobind Singh, and innumerable martyred ones who were done to death in their effort to protect Hinduism and Hindu culture, and to give the country freedom from the tyrants at that time. Will you hear me? But if you go on insisting that we be kept in bondage, you cannot, by any twisting of words, make us or anybody else believe that you trust us. Remember, distrust can have big results....

"In the end, I must say that we cannot be satisfied unless we get rid of the communal domination of Punjabi Hindus, led by the Arya Samajists, who, in their effort to destroy our religion, went so far as to even deny their mother tongue. We have demanded a Punjabi-speaking State as the only permanent solution of the Punjab problem. It solves both the questions of communal domination and of language. Some modified form of our proposals are suggested by some well-wishing gentlemen, but to me, all these solutions appear to be temporary, and not conducive to permanent peace and settlement...."

In accordance with the resolution of the Sikh Convention

held on the 15th October, 1955, authorising Master Tara Singh to convey the resolution to the Government of India, a deputation comprising Master Tara Singh and four others met the Prime Minister on the 24th October, 1955, and held a long discussion with him. These parleys continued at intervals. There were many meetings of the kind between the deputa-tionists and the Prime Minister, but nothing was known of the details. If there was any covert meeting on behalf of the Akali Dal or by some intervener with the Prime Minister, nobody was aware of it. The reference, however, in Master Tara Singh's Presidential address in December, 1955, at Amritsar that some formula had been placed before him by some well-wishing gentleman was the result of someone in the deputation having had talks directly and separately with the Prime Minister on the issue involved or some intervener lending his office for the purpose. In this connection, the Sikhs recalled the meeting of Hukam Singh with the Prime Minister on the 17th July, 1955.

It was on the 28th January, 1956, for the first time that it was reported in the press that the parleys between the delegation and the Central Government for the settlement of the Punjab problem had broken down. The Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal had never been taken into confidence at any stage of the negotiations, nor had any individual member of the Working Committee been contacted. It was whispered that there had been a break, when Joginder Singh M.P., from U.P. met Pandit Pant and Maulana Azad, and had the talks resumed between the Sikh Delegation and the Cabinet sub-committee. The talks started again on the 7th February and the Sikh Delegation met the Cabinet Sub-committee. It was on the 7th February evening that I received a telegram from Master Tara Singh asking me to reach Delhi immediately, and I was also rung up by Giani Kartar Singh and Hukam Singh to reach there by the next morning. I reached there on the morning of the 8th February, 1956, when a meeting of a few individuals was called by the Sikh Delegation for consultations. It was there that we came to know of the scheme later known as the 'Regional Formula'. Notes recorded in my diary at that

time give an apt description of what transpired in the meeting and the reactions of the participants and the discussion with the Sikh Delegation then. I wrote then in my diary, "There were, besides the five members of the Akali Delegation present, S. Bhupinder Singh Man, Dr. Tarlok Singh of U.P., S. Kartar Singh Dewana, Bawa Harkishan Singh and S. Bahadur Singh, M.P. and I in the meeting on the 8th at 12 noon at S. Hukam Singh's residence at 12, Queen Victoria Road, where Giani Kartar Singh unfolded the plan given by the Cabinet-sub-committee about the proposed reorganisation of the Punjab State. We were informed that the Sub-committee had agreed to give statutory powers to the zonal councils (this was the word used then) comprising the regional members of the legislature, who would have definite deliberative powers on all subjects except law and order, finance and taxation. Their vote on the subjects would be binding on the Cabinet, and in case of conflict, the Governor's decision would be final. There would be an instrument of instructions to guide the Governor. The regional language would be Punjabi in Gurmukhi script, but the Pepsu Formula would be applied to the Punjabi-speaking region of the Pepsu whereas the Sachhar Formula would be applied to the Punjabi-speaking region of the Punjab. The court and official language would be Punjabi in Gurmukhi script. The present discrimination between the Hindu and the Sikh scheduled castes would be removed on All India basis. Opinion would be sought from the States about the need of the Gurdwara Act on All India basis. We were given a historical review of the negotiations, culminating in the finality of the talks. I questioned on certain points, and enquired if in case of concurrence between the Cabinet and the Governor, the views of the Regional Councils would not be over-ruled. Giani Kartar Singh admitted that this possibility could not be excluded, but it was an extreme case, not expected on every occasion. I enquired if the Sikhs would be given parity as the combined Hindu strength of the regions would be much more. This, too, was said to be the position. During the discussions, Master Tara Singh stated that he agreed that this could not be a final solution. He sought the opinion of those present, S.

Gian Singh Rarewala gave full support to the proposal. So did Sardar Hukam Singh adding at the same time that if Master Tara Singh wanted to launch some movement against it, he would readily join it. Bawa Harkishan Singh then gave his unstinted support.... What an irony that Sardar Bahadur Singh too gave his full support. I said there was something in it, no doubt, but in what manner its working could be agreed to, depended on the draft of the scheme. I said, however, that our opinion would be dependent on the draft, Sardar Bhupinder Singh Man would not give an opinion but said that he would like to have the opinion of Master Tara Singh to guide him. Accordingly S. Bhupinder Singh said that the scheme should be worked out. Sardar Kartar Singh Dewana would not give any opinion, contending that he would speak to Masterji privately. He, of course, expressed his extreme loyalty to Masterji. Giani Kartar Singh expressed his inclination to accept the formula as it was. Master Tara Singh did not express any opinion and seemed distressed.... I was told by Giani Kartar Singh to prepare a draft of representation to the Prime Minister for inclusion of additional subjects in the regional list. We were also told that there would be a separate list for the regional subjects. I was asked to go through the State List and Concurrent List, and prepare a note justifying the inclusion of other subjects in the regional list.

It was obvious that the principle of the Regional Councils (later to be called Committees) was conceded with some undefined statutory powers. Giani Kartar Singh was very keen that the younger section of the Akali Dal should be canvassed for its support to the Formula, and I was asked to see Sarup Singh, at one time President founder of the Sikh Students Federation and then a youth leader. I thought the matter over and felt that the rejection of the Formula would amount to a vote of 'No Confidence' in the Akali Delegation, and, as such, liquidation of the leadership, which the Akali Dal could ill-afford at that time. Therefore, I thought that the best course in the circumstances would be that the Formula be accepted as it was. It was certainly a great tragedy, but a split in the Akali Dal and a removal of the leadership would have been a

greater tragedy. I spoke to Sarup Singh. He was totally opposed to the Formula at the outset. At that time, I had carried the impression that the Regional Council would have sub-legislature powers which proved incorrect later. Sarup Singh was terribly resentful of the attitude of the Big Five, and felt that they had failed miserably. His view was that the Regional Formula was the brain wave of Hukam Singh, who had sent the articles of 'Free Thinker' where this had been suggested to Pandit Pant. Sarup Singh further felt that the articles of the 'Free Thinker' were from Hukam Singh under non-de-plume. He said that he had this information from Gian Singh, who had told him that he had overheard Pandit Pant thanking Hukam Singh for the suggestion of Regional Scheme. Hukam Singh only admitted to sending the article of 'Free Thinker' to Pandit Pant. It seems plausible that the idea of the Regional Scheme came in at the instance of Hukam Singh, who had written these articles. But according to Giani Kartar Singh, these articles were from one Mr. Rajinder Gupta who had written them under the non-de-plume of 'Free Thinker'.²

My diary notes of the 13th March, 1956, tell what transpired in the General Meeting of the Akali Dal on the 11th March, 1956, "Sardar Gian Singh has unfolded the plan seeking approval at the meeting of the General Council of the Akali Dal. Possibly he has been allocated this duty by Giani Kartar Singh who wants to placate him. Giani Kartar Singh is very clever that way. Bhai Jodh Singh spoke first. A Praja Socialist by conviction, an Akali by expediency—a member of the deputation, he was most eloquent in its justification. He was interrupted from time to time for overdoing it. But I could see that the speakers were chosen to carry through the resolution and silence the critics. A suppression of the general criticism was manoeuvred, and, for the purpose, many gentlemen from Haryana were invited to expound the good points of the Formula. They had nothing to do with the Akali Dal, but they were being made to speak to impress the members of the Akali Dal. I saw that Giani Kartar Singh had arranged for a few of his followers to hoot down any

speaker who dared to criticise the proposals in a serious manner. Professor Satbir Singh had to face this treatment when he spoke after I had finished my speech. S. Pritam Singh Gojran was most eloquent in his opposition, and spoke after Giani Kartar Singh. But his speech was only eloquent and sentimental without much reasoning in it. I spoke after him, and requested those present not to be led by the heat of the moment. The occasion called for calm consideration and sober and peaceful deliberations. If the Formula was important, then the decision was more important. India was awaiting their decision. It had been conceded by Giani Kartar Singh and Gian Singh that they had not got 'Punjabi Suba'. (It fell far short of it. It was not even the substance of Punjabi Suba.) It would have been well, if our leaders had rejected it then and there, but they had brought it. We could certainly reject it, but at the cost of our unity, which was the most important of all things. I criticised Gian Singh Rarewala saying that Punjabi Suba of our conception was not in our interest. I questioned the sudden change in his views, asked if our leaders had been deceiving and cheating and misleading the Sikhs. I could not believe this. I also criticised Giani Kartar Singh for quoting instances of the development of the Indian Constitution and the slow growth of power. Possibly, this argument had been used that we too would surely and steadily gain power. But it was being forgotten that the Congress had all along rejected such proposals. Yet, I said that nevertheless I was not for total rejection. The people had done their duty. They had given full support to the leaders and implicitly followed them. They had stood the test twice in one year. They had returned 98% of the Akali Dal non-votaries to the S.G.P.C. against heavy odds and had thus given an proof of their implicit loyalty to the Panthik ideology. This was the first test. By rallying around the Akali Dal in a manner during their morcha by sending over 12,000 people to jail, they had shown faith in the Akali Dal leadership. They had again rallied in lakhs at the time of the Akali Dal procession held during the Congress Session.... The Formula might be unsatisfactory, but the leaders were asking

you to work for it. The Formula might not be Punjabi Suba. It might not be the substance of Punjabi Suba but it was certainly the seedling that needed the nurture that human devotion, unity and sacrifice could give it. Let that be given, and it was certain that it would grow. At this time it was unity that was called for.³ The speeches on the decision were tape recorded.

Master Tara Singh made his position clear in a speech made at the meeting of the General Body of the Akali Dal. He said, "Our object is not to create trouble. The proposal offered by the Government does not constitute the Punjabi Suba but under the present circumstances, I do not want to fight." His was a short speech, leaving it to the General Body to decide the issue.

There was a stir, which was more of a revolt, in the younger elements of the Akali Dal circles and a split seemed imminent. Many members of the Working Committee of the Akali Dal, and most of my friends, were very much against it, and wanted to press for its rejection or at least to place their dissent on record. It seemed clear that the Akali Dal would split, and might even break up, if a division was pressed on the issue. Therefore, pressure was brought to bear upon our young friends, and canvassing was done for its acceptance on the plea that the Formula was a seedling of the Punjabi-speaking State which would in a short time grow into a full-fledged Punjabi-speaking State. On that assurance, we were able to carry through the resolution in the General Body of the Akali Dal. However, Sarup Singh did not attend the meeting of the General Body of the Akali Dal as he did not subscribe to this, and another youth leader Amar Singh recorded his dissent. The resolution passed on that day was :

"The Sikh community, after full and mature consideration comes to the conclusion that a unilingual Punjabi-speaking State was the remedy for the difficulties experienced, and the troubles suffered by the Sikhs after partition. Consequently, they put this demand before the Government of India through their representatives, in the hope that such a demand which is in consonance with the democratic principles enunciated by

members of the ruling party, would be conceded. The Government, however, after discussion with the delegation has evolved a different plan.

"Conscious of the national problems, and considering the national situation, this gathering in the belief that the new Plan may solve some of the difficulties which the Punjabi Suba was expected to remove, gives its general support to the principle of the plan and is prepared to work it honestly.

"On going through the memoranda sent to Master Tara Singh, the gathering finds that even within the principles agreed to, there are points which need elaboration, clarification, revision and amplification. Some of the points have already been conveyed to the Prime Minister. The gathering, therefore, asks the deputationists to have these improvements made and authorises them to finally accept the draft.

"It also expects that Himachal Pradesh with certain related areas added to it, will be kept separate and not added to Punjab. The gathering hopes that in the interest of communal harmony, and to give a chance to the scheme elaborated after a prolonged and patient discussion, the same spirit of goodwill and sympathetic understanding of all concerned will be maintained."

The main points for which revision and amplification was sought were three; firstly, the delegation was requested to have the number of the subjects within the purview of the regional bodies increased; secondly, to see that the regional bodies should be able to initiate recommendations on the subjects allocated to them; and thirdly, to allow a question hour in the regional bodies, to make them miniature legislatures and to justify that we had got substance of Punjabi Suba. The delegation, however, did not succeed in regard to the first and the third matter though the clause pertaining to the initiation of the recommendation to the regional bodies was incorporated in the final shape of the Formula.

Master Tara Singh, explaining his stand on the Regional Formula, said in a press statement on the 26th March 1956 :

"I accepted the zonal scheme not because it gives us the substance of our demand for a Punjabi-speaking State but for

reasons which are given hereunder ; in fact, I was indecisive for many days after the scheme was evolved. I am not sure if the scheme will give us fair protection against the aggressive communal domination under which we have been groaning during the past 8 years. So I could not make up my mind. I was afraid lest this Formula in practice should prove to be a fallacy far short of our demand and that a difference of opinion in the ranks may divide and weaken us. I hesitated to play a role which would cause frustration and disintegration in the Khalsa Panth resulting in some sort of a catastrophe which it is difficult to foresee. I hesitated, and felt miserable for several days. I was thinking and thinking constantly over what might happen if we rejected the scheme. I arrived at the conclusion that if we rejected the scheme and did not resort to some direct action, frustration within the ranks was sure to follow, which would be dangerous to us and to the country. So the rejection of the scheme should be immediately followed by a non-violent direct action. Any direct action also appeared to me to be a very risky job at the present moment, in view of the internal and external situation in the country. I could have taken the risk at a more peaceful time. I believe in adopting such peaceful measures to gain legitimate demands such as may not cause destruction and chaos in the country. For if chaos is created, everything is lost. I felt miserable. I felt I was between the devil and the deep sea. While thinking this way, I talked to a friend of mine, who advised me to take a step which could be retraced if it was found to be wrong. I saw a dim ray which could take us out of the deep ravine. But I was hesitant till I heard the speeches in the meeting on the 11th March."

This statement is indicative of the fact that Master Tara Singh was given the impression that the Regional Formula as offered was the final say of the Government, and that they would not go further, come what might. Who gave him that impression is a matter which was known only to Master Tara Singh. One thing, however, was obvious and that was that Master Tara Singh was not inclined to accept the Formula and did not see much of substance in it however splendidly it had been depicted to him. His statement that his hesitance about

its acceptance was eliminated because of the speeches on the 11th March are not convincing, because the speeches on the 11th March were consequent upon the decision of the delegation on its acceptance as announced by Master Tara Singh himself. The reason that, under the circumstances, he could not and would not fight, and as such the Formula had to be accepted seems more plausible. The speeches by the members of the Working Committee after the acceptance of the Formula by the delegation, and Master Tara Singh personally, were only to carry through the resolution unanimously, to avoid a split in the Shiromani Akali Dal ranks, which otherwise appeared imminent.

Hukam Singh, writing in his paper the "Spokesman" on the 30th April 1956, said : "The scheme is intended to guard against any aggression by these exploiters, particularly in the case of cultural spheres. Though over-all control of the State Legislature and Cabinet is maintained, the Sikhs have given a general approval to the scheme, though their representatives are still struggling to get some improvements before conveying full approval to the details....

"These Regional Committees would comprise the members of the legislatures for that region. They have a limited sphere of subjects wherein they can give advice. There would be the Governor to intervene when there is conflict. It is yet to be seen how the scheme is implemented."

This statement in itself by the main architect of the scheme would show that the success and the failure of the scheme did not depend on the substance therein, but on its implementation ; and its implementation was in the hands of the head of the Government, Partap Singh Kairon, whose antipathy and opposition to any Formula of that nature was too well known to need consideration.

The Regional Formula that was evolved as a settlement after 8 years of struggle had the following salient features :

"1. There will be one legislature for the whole of the reorganised state of the Punjab, which will be the sole law-making body for the entire State, and there will be one Governor for the State, aided and advised by a Council of Ministers

responsible to the State Assembly for the entire field of administration.

2. For a more convenient transaction of the business of the Government with regard to some specified matters, the State will be divided into two regions, namely, the Punjabi-speaking and the Hindi-speaking Region.

3. For each Region, there will be a Regional Committee of the State Assembly consisting of the members of the State Assembly belonging to each Region including the Ministers from that Region but not including the Chief Minister.

4. Legislation relating to specified matters will be referred to the Regional Committees. In respect of specified matters proposals may also be made by the Regional Committee to the State Government for legislation or with regard to the question of general policy not involving any financial commitments other than expenditure of a routine and incidental character.

5. The advice tendered by the Regional Committee will normally be accepted by the Government and the State Legislature. In case of a difference of opinion, reference will be made to the Governor whose decision will be final and binding."

The subsequent paras enumerated the 14 subjects entrusted to the Regional Committee, empowered the President to constitute Regional Committees, and make provisions in the rules of business and rules of procedure to give effect to the working of the Regional Committees. But it also laid down that "no change would be made without the consent of the President." Provision was made also for the demarcation of two regions and it was declared :

"The State will be bilingual, recognising both Punjabi (in Gurmukhi script) and Hindi (in Devanagri script) as the official languages of the State."

Immediately after the acceptance of the scheme by the General Body of the Akali Dal and the announcement of the 'settlement' as it began to be called, with the Government at that time, it seemed obvious that there would be a rift in the ranks of the Akali Dal on the issue of joining the Congress,

particularly since some thought that the Akali Dal had neither any programme nor any slogan left for the coming General Elections. It was then that Gian Singh Rarewala issued a statement conveying that, after the Regional Formula had been accepted, there was no necessity for the Akali Dal to have a separate political existence. Some of the Akali leaders like Giani Kartar Singh have been thinking that way too but they were not ready to make an announcement of that nature. Therefore, the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal in its meeting on the 7th June, 1956, considered the defection in its ranks and in its leadership, and passed the following resolution :

"The Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal has considered the recent statement of Sardar Gian Singh Rarewala, and the situation that has arisen thereafter, and deems it necessary to reiterate that the Dal strongly believes in the maintenance of a distinct entity and necessity of the existence of the Shiromani Akali Dal as a representative *organisation of the community to safeguard the religious and political interests which are basically correlated, and, as such cannot be separated.* Accordingly, the Shiromani Akali Dal strongly condemns all moves from any quarters that are contrary to the above basic policies.

"Therefore, the Shiromani Akali Dal definitely and emphatically directs all the well-wishers of the Panth in general, and nominees and the representatives of the Shiromani Akali Dal in the legislature in particular, to stand by it loyally, and resist all such moves."

There was some disappointment and dejection among the Sikhs at the acceptance of the Regional Formula by the General Body of Shiromani Akali Dal, and there was widespread whispering amongst the younger elements, that the then leadership of the Akali Dal, and also the Regional Formula be disowned. The suspicion about the nature of the deal with the Centre was confirmed, when 9 days after the acceptance of the Formula by the General Body of the Akali Dal, the Prime Minister proposed the name of Hukam Singh as Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, which proposal was seconded by the

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs. There was a general impression that he had been rewarded for whittling down the demand for the Punjabi Suba. But this could be any body's guess, and the less said about it, the better.

However, before the opposition to the Regional Formula could be organised in the Akali Dal, and before public opinion amongst the Sikhs could be channelised by the youth leaders in that direction, the Hindu opposition to the Regional Formula became so virulent and intense and their condemnation of it became so aggressive, that the Sikh circles began to feel that there must be something in the Regional Formula, if it was being so intensely opposed by the Hindu leaders. The intense opposition of the Hindus diluted the opposition amongst the Sikhs. The Hindu agitation took to violence, and one Sikh Head constable, Darbara Singh, was killed at Amritsar and the police had to resort to a lathi charge, when a Maha Punjab Samiti agitational crowd brick-batted the police. The opposition to the Regional Formula from the communal Hindus reinstated Master Tara Singh, in his former position and a big party was given to him by the gentry of Delhi Sikhs at the Constitution Club, which was attended by the Prime Minister, wherein speeches were made in appreciation of the services of Master Tara Singh to the cause of Panthik Unity. The Prime Minister also spoke highly of Master Tara Singh and said, "I admire two qualities of Master Tara Singh, his courage and his honesty of purpose."

There has been a controversy, which continues still, as to who was responsible for the Formula. Many years later it came to be known definitely that Hukam Singh was the author of the scheme. Master Tara Singh wrote articles in October, 1959, in his paper the "Prabhat", wherein he said, that he himself had subscribed to the Regional Formula and was a party to it, but that the real responsibility was that of Hukam Singh. He wrote therein, "That the draft of the Regional Formula, which had been agreed to between ourselves and the Government, was transmitted to the Government while I was still in jail, and I got a copy of it in jail, and the said draft was better in its original form than in its final shape." This was

during the period from July to October, 1955, when Master Tara Singh was in Gurgaon Jail awaiting trial for defying the ban on the shouting of slogans. Hukam Singh denied this charge of Master Tara Singh, and his stand was explained given in his statement published in his paper, the "Spokesman" in its Guru Nanak Number of 1959. His version was as under :

"Master Tara Singh convened a convention at Amritsar inviting the representatives of the Akali Dal and also those of other sections of the Sikhs. The convention rejected the proposals of the Commission, but before taking the next step, the convention agreed to contact the Government for an alternative solution. Master Tara Singh wrote to Pandit Nehru, intimating that a representation of the Akali Dal desired to see him. Pandit Nehru fixed the time at 5 p.m. Master Tara Singh met Pandit Nehru. Up to that time, nobody ever thought of a Regional Formula, and, in fact, there was no question of it. The interview took place, but there were no prospects of a Punjabi Suba. The Government was in no mood to go beyond the exclusion of Himachal Pradesh, and the proportion of Sikhs would not rise above 35% in any case. Then I worked at the Regional Formula. It was duly discussed and finally agreed to by us.

"It can be said that I might be wrong about my estimates, which were correct ; but it is quite contrary to facts, that the Formula was drafted earlier, and a copy of it was sent to Masterji, while he was in jail. The version of Masterji is baseless, and an injustice has been done to me, I would appeal to Master Tara Singh to mentally review the sequence of events, he would find that his version is contrary to facts."

According to Hukam Singh's admission in the above statement, the Central Congress leadership had been sounded by him on the Regional Formula, on which the delegation might agree after the 24th October, 1955, and the parleys with the Akali Delegation after the Akali Conference of December, 1955, were on the basis of it. How sad and tragic that the other members of the Delegation had been not taken into confidence by Hukam Singh, as Master Tara Singh's statement shows. No member of the Shiromani Akali Dal Working Committee

was contacted or consulted either. What motive inspired Hukam Singh is anybody's guess.

The draft States Reorganisation Bill, 1956, as it emerged after negotiations with the Sikh Delegation was sent to the Punjab Legislative Assembly for consideration. The debate and discussion thereon exactly reflected the communal mentality prevalent in the State against even the creation of the Regional Committees. Partap Singh Kairon, while speaking on the Bill, when introducing it laid emphasis on the Zonal Scheme incorporated in it, whereby the Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi and Rajasthan had been made into one zone out of the five zones in which the country was split, thereby conveying that the Regional Committees did not carry much weight. It was interesting to note that all the Punjabi Region Hindu speakers influenced by the Arya Samaj propaganda and views tried to oppose or dilute the working of the Regional Committees. Even Bhim Sen Sachhar, the ex-Chief Minister of the Punjab, while participating in the discussion subtly supported the demand of the Maha Punjab when he said, "Mr. Speaker, I do not think that there is any member in the House, who opposes the merger of Punjab and Pepsu on the ground that something more would have been added to the two units. One could understand one's logic if some one were to say that Himachal be merged with the Punjab, because the Bhakra Dam which is the second biggest dam in the world is situated along with the catchment area in Himachal, and this territory abounds in rich and dense forests, therefore it was proper and essential to keep all the area under the control of one Government." Another member, D.D. Puri, condemning the proposal of Regional Committees, said: "Regional feelings will grow as a result of the Regional Formula even though the framers of the Bill do not intend to do so. Group feelings are very dangerous for the unity of India...." Rala Ram, Principal of a college, appreciated the provisions of the Zonal Councils, but criticised the Regional Committees suggesting that, "they should not be on linguistic basis, but they should be regional development committees" A similar stand was made by another Hindu Congress member from the Punjabi Region—

Dewan Jagdish Chander, when he said, "I am also one of those who were of the opinion that the recommendations of the Commission should have been implemented in toto," by joining Himachal Pradesh with Punjab and Pepsu to create a Maha Punjab and added, "anyhow, it is clearly indicated in it (the Report) that there is a great weight in the argument in favour of a merger of Himchal with Punjab." A woman member from Jullundur, Shrimati Sita Devi, was more eloquent and said, "So far as the demand for Maha Punjab is concerned, I want to say that the State Government and the Provincial Congress Committee had also submitted a memorandum to the States Reorganisation Commission favouring the demand.... I am one of those who supported the demand made in the words of Shri Bhim Sen Sachhar, that the three States be merged into one big State. I always remain on the look-out for the betterment of the country as a whole. I have myself appeared before the Commission, and placed the demand for the merger of three States." Comrade Ram Kishan, later Congress Chief Minister, also condemned the Formula, and said, "But I am sorry to note that Himachal has not been merged in the new State of Punjab, Himachal has been ignored. I myself placed the demand for the inclusion of Himachal in the Punjab, before the States Reorganisation Commission, but that stand did not find favour with the Commission."

The unanimity in the opposition of the Hindu Congress members from the Punjabi Region reflected the communal outlook of the Hindu section of the population of the Punjabi Region. Of course, members from Haryana, Chaudhri Siri Chand and Rizak Ram, supported the Formula. Chaudhri Siri Chand suggested that the Regional Committees be named Regional Councils, and added, "Its success and failure depends in a large measure upon the manner in which it is put into execution by the Government." Rizak Ram said, while supporting the Formula, "The question of forming a separate Haryana State may advisedly be deferred for some time to give the measure a new trial."

In spite of the Akali Dal resolution of the 6th June, 1956, Gian Singh Ratwala, with his followers, joined the Congress

in early August, 1956 with an eye to the General Elections in 1957. He held a convention too under the auspices of Malva Akali Dal to have his stand endorsed, but there was not much response from the general public to his views. Soon after it came to be known that Giani Kartar Singh directly, and through Hukam Singh was having a talk with the Congress High Command for the merger of Akali Dal members in the Congress, subject to the condition that the Akali Dal stayed on as an organisation. It came out in the press that Hukam Singh had met Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and U.N. Dhebar, then President of the Congress, and efforts were also being made to invoke the aid of Baldev Singh as a mediator in this arrangement. Giani Kartar Singh even opined in the meeting of the Working Committee, which was considering the expulsion of Gian Singh Rarewala from the Akali Dal on his defection to the Congress, that the ultimate good of the Sikhs was to join the Congress, but that there must be certain conditions before this could be done. He considered that three conditions were necessary before such a move could mature :

- (i) That there should be Congress Committees on regional basis.
- (ii) That the Akali Dal, should be allowed to maintain its position by having a certain political status.
- (iii) That there should be proper adjustment of seats.

Thereafter there were several interviews between Maulana Azad and Giani Kartar Singh and Hukam Singh. How far Master Tara Singh had been taken into confidence is not known, but I was told by Giani Kartar Singh that Maulana Azad was helpful, and that the Shiromani Akali Dal would be very much benefited if an understanding could be arrived at with the Congress on some honourable basis. The merger move of the Akali leaders was not happily received by the masses, and it seemed possible that if it fructified, there might be a vacuum in the Sikh leadership, giving an opportunity for the creation of another Akali Dal. It was in early September that Giani Kartar Singh informed me of the terms and conditions on which there could be understanding between the two

organisations. He told me that the Congress was agreeable to the extent of allowing the Akali Dal to confine itself to cultural, religious and social activities, but they could not allow it to participate in political activities. He read a draft on telephone while ringing me up from Delhi. My reaction was not favourable, but I was told by Gianiji that he had shown the final draft of the letter to Master Tara Singh whose reaction had been favourable. He asked me to see Master Tara Singh at Amritsar. Accordingly, I went to Amritsar, and enquired of Masterji if he had seen the letter that had been finally received. Masterji said that he had been shown a letter by Hukam Singh and Giani Kartar Singh at Abohar, and that he had given a non-committal reply. We had a discussion, and I gave my reaction, saying that after we had agreed to the Regional Formula, it was in the fitness of things that we should cooperate with the Congress in its implementation and allow our members to join the Congress but that we could not give up the fundamental right to agitate whenever we, as a minority community, felt that we were not being fairly dealt with; and for the purpose, the Akali Dal alone could take such measures. Therefore it was essential that the Akali Dal be given a right to that extent. Master Tara Singh agreed with me, and he conveyed this to Giani Kartar Singh. I also rang up Giani Kartar Singh on the 10th September, 1956, at night from Jullundur about our discussions, and he informed me that he would hold a meeting of a few friends at Ludhiana, and bring the draft there. He told me that at Abohar, Master Tara Singh seemed to have been satisfied with the draft. It was Giani Kartar Singh who had initiated talks with the Congress High Command. He had met Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who had advised joining the Akalis with the Congress, and had promised his good offices in that regard. Correspondence ensued in September 1956, when Giani Kartar Singh in his letter dated 1st September, 1956, informed him that he would place, "this advice before Master Tara Singh and the Akali Dal for their consideration. But, naturally, inquiries will be made from me, as to what would be the position of the Akali Dal if, God forbid,...there is some discrimination

against, or grave injustice is done to the Sikh community, and whether their representative body will have the right to raise its voice, hold meetings and take steps to get that discrimination removed or the injustice redressed." Maulana in his reply of 12th September 1956, said, ". I am surprised that you have found it necessary to raise this question. The position in the event of such contingencies is so obvious that no question need arise. The constitution of India has guaranteed freedom of expression, association and press. If there is infringement of any legitimate rights or liberties, every citizen of India has the right to raise his voice, in a legitimate and constitutional manner, against the infringement. This right belongs to members of the Akali Dal, as much as to others, by virtue of their being citizens of India. The Akali Dal, as a religious and cultural organisation of the Sikhs, will certainly have the right to raise its voice if there is any injustice or infringement of legitimate rights or liberties. It is not necessary for an organisation to be political, for the exercise of this right. It is a right which belongs equally to all citizens and to all organisations, whether religious, cultural or political ..."

This reply was supplemented by another letter dated the 21st September, 1956, which makes interesting reading, concerning the negotiations between Giani Kartar Singh and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. The letter of the 21st September, 1956, said: "Please refer to your letter dated 1st September, 1956, and my reply dated 12th September, 1956. You had asked, that, if the Shiromani Akali Dal confined itself to religious and cultural activities, would it be free in the future to raise its voice in the event of any injustice being done to the Sikhs. I had assured you in my reply, that the Indian Constitution has given the right to every Indian to raise his voice in a legitimate and constitutional manner in defence of his rights.

"After reading in the press certain recent statements of some Akali leaders, I thought I should further clarify the position so that there may be no room for misunderstanding. Suppose the Shiromani Akali Dal decided to confine its activities to cultural

and religious activities only, and advised its members to join the Indian National Congress, and suppose some action of the Government is interpreted by some Sikhs as an act of injustice to the Sikh community. In such an eventuality we should have a clear idea of what the position would be. Will it mean that the Akali Dal, in such a case, transforms itself into a political organisation and leads an agitation against the Government? I should like to make it clear that such a step on the part of the Akali Dal will be against the spirit of our present assurance. The only legitimate way open to a Sikh member of the Congress would be to draw the attention of the Punjab Congress and, if necessary, of the Congress President to the grievance. The decision of the Congress authorities arrived at after due enquiry and consideration must then be respected by him. No doubt the Shiromani Akali Dal, which would then be a purely religious and cultural organisation, would still have the right to raise its voice against any grievance, but the individual Sikhs who are members of the Congress party will not participate in any action in defiance of the Congress party decision.

"Recently, Master Tara Singh Ji is supposed to have declared, that members of the Akali Dal will not join the Congress except on their own conditions. I should like to make it very explicit, that only those are welcome to join the Congress who accept the Congress principles and policies without any conditions.

"Kindly consider this letter as a necessary continuation of my previous letter, so as to avoid any possibility of vagueness and misunderstanding."

The perusal of the correspondence would show that there were trends in the Akali leadership for a settlement with the Congress. The situation was also such that there was no alternative to it. The issue involved at the time was that whether the Akali Dal should give cooperation to the Congress in order to properly implement the Regional Formula, both in spirit and letter, or whether it should start its agitation for a full-fledged Punjabi Suba and approach the masses with a direct appeal that it had committed a mistake in having accepted the

Regional Formula. Master Tara Singh was very confused, on account of Giani Kartar Singh and Hukam Singh's insistence on joining the Congress. The main opposition in the Akali Dal came from Sarup Singh and his friends of the Sikh Students Federation. There was no doubt that the Shiromani Akali Dal was faced with a very critical situation. After the correspondence between Maulana Azad and Giani Kartar Singh, exigencies of events did not permit any withdrawal from the cooperation extended in the letters to the Congress. The General Elections were about to be held in a few months' time, and it was being questioned if the Akali Dal could fight against the Congress, and if so, with what slogan and on which issue. The Akali leadership and the General Body of the Akali Dal had unanimously accepted the Regional Formula with all its shortcomings, and had announced to the people that they were out to implement it in order to give it a trial. Many of its prominent members like Gian Singh Rarewala and others had defected and joined the Congress announcing that there was no issue left for the time being on which to fight the Congress, and the best course was to join the Congress in order to implement the Regional Formula. I discussed these things with several friends, including Sarup Singh, and felt that there was no way out but to take a leap in the dark. The Congress High Command had accepted the distinct entity of the Panth, and even conceded dual membership to the Akali workers, i.e., both of the Akali Dal and the Congress, provided the Akali Dal changed its constitution as suggested by Maulana Azad. Accordingly, I discussed the matter with Master Tara Singh. We probed the issues involved, and I gave him my frank advice. I had been asked to persuade Master Tara Singh to agree to joining the Congress. Giani Kartar Singh was keen that we should have the resolution adopted in the Working Committee and a meeting of the prominent persons before the 23rd September, 1956, when Pandit Nehru was to leave for Saudi Arabia, but I again found Master Tara Singh indecisive, and had to postpone the meeting to the 30th September, 1956. Accordingly, the meeting of the Working Committee and of other prominent special invitees was held on the 30th Septem-

ber, and again I was asked to draft the main resolution of which the draft is still with me duly corrected at places in Hukam Singh's hand, which I moved in that fateful meeting. It was supported by Harcharan Singh Hudhara. The resolution was a very long one, starting with the history of the Akali Dal's collaboration and cooperation with the Congress, its fight in the freedom struggle against the British Rule leading to post-partition period in which the Shiromani Akali Dal again extended its cooperation in the changed circumstances of the rehabilitation problems, and of the necessity of the building up of the new State of East Punjab. The resolution further dealt with the period, in which the Akali Dal remained mainly concerned with the religious, social and cultural activities of the Panth, but later was again constrained to fight the Congress on account of its not meeting the Sikh demands while framing the constitution, and according discriminatory treatment to the Sikhs. The resolution then made a reference to its manifesto of 1951-52 on the issue of the demand of the Punjabi Suba, and then it dealt with the subsequent history in the following words :

"Consequently, the demand for a Punjabi Suba on linguistic and cultural basis remained the chief aim and objective of the activities of the Akali Dal for the last 5 years, and the climax was reached during 1955, when about twelve thousand Sikhs courted arrest. After the withdrawal of the ban, there came a stage of negotiation and as a result of protracted talks, these concrete conclusions were reached :

"(i) Punjabi has been recognised a regional language of the Punjab.

(ii) The order regarding the Scheduled Castes has been amended and there will be equal treatment to both Hindu and Sikh Scheduled Castes.

(iii) There will not be any interference in the internal administration of the Gurdwaras, and we have been assured that the old convention regarding any amendments to the Sikh Gurdwaras Act would be respected.

(iv) A few instances of the glaring injustice to the Sikh public servants shall be looked into with sympathy, and redress,

wherever needed, would be given. These grievances having been removed, there remained the question of the real representatives of the Sikhs participating and having equal opportunities in the administration spheres of the State. Our demand for a Punjabi Suba was not conceded. But a Region will be carved out on the basis of language, wherein the Sikhs cannot be suppressed by sheer weight of numbers. The Regional Formula devised offers good prospects, of course, if honestly implemented in an atmosphere, wherein the Sikhs might be able to contribute their best to the service of the country.

"There was no doubt that the Formula fell short of the Sikh demand, but the Akali Dal accepted it in the larger interests of the country, in the hope that with goodwill and mutual accord, this might afford the protection that we had been asking for all these years.

"Unluckily, some communal sections have not been able to reconcile themselves to this arrangement. The Hindu Maha Sabha, the Jan Sangh and the Arya Samaj all pooled their resources and continued to wreck this arrangement. After the merger of Haryana Front in the Congress, the only body in the field which desired to see this Formula work successfully was the Congress. There were dangers ahead that, if communal elements gained ascendancy and succeeded in nullifying the efficacy of the Formula, the Sikh community might have to undergo many other trials.

"The Shiromani Akali Dal feels much concerned over this situation, and is keen to see the Regional Formula yield tangible results. This can under the present circumstances, be possible only if the pre-Regional Formula forces are strengthened, and wholehearted cooperation is given to them. The main difference in the political field having been resolved, the Congress and the Akali Dal have a common cause in seeing the Regional Formula work fruitfully in its true spirit. The Akali Dal is already working for the successful implementation of the second five-year plan, and is ready to join hands for development schemes.

"The Akali Dal and the Haryana Front had pledged them-

selves to work together for the implementation of the Regional Formula. The Front has joined the Congress as a body. The Congress can lend support to the Dal for this purpose. Besides this, there is another wider point of view. India is at present faced with political changes both internal and external, which should impell every patriotic Indian to make his full and effective contribution to making efforts to assure the security, stability and ordered progress of the country.

"When such is the case, it becomes desirable that the Akali Dal should again repose full confidence in the Congress, and its leaders in so far as a political programme is concerned, and concentrate its energies on the economic, religious, social and cultural activities.

"It is, therefore, resolved that :

(i) The Akali Dal would not have any separate political programme of its own.

(ii) The Dal would concentrate on the protection and promotion of religious, educational, cultural, social and economic interests of the Panth, and would guard against any violation and infringement of fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution that adversely hit the Sikhs.

(iii) The Dal would actively participate in the Formula, and in the implementation of various plans for the development of the country."

The resolution was passed unanimously in the meeting of the 30th September, 1956. It was announced therein that an Akali conference would be held between the 4th and the 11th November when a present of two lakh members would be made to the Congress. At that time, the Akali Dal had a membership of 4,00,000. But this was not to be, as subsequent events would show. The meeting of the General Body of the Akali Dal was called for the 24th November, 1956, in which 322 delegates from the Punjab and outside were present. I had to speak again to support the resolution which had been earlier passed by the Working Committee on the 30th September. There was opposition this time, by five members of the General Body, which included Gurbakhsh Singh, Advocate, of Gurdaspur, Amar Singh Ambalvi, Advocate,

Master Sujan Singh of Sarhali and Bedi Rachhpal Singh. The resolution was, however, passed with 5 dissidents voting against it. Master Tara Singh supported the resolution.

My friends and I joined the Congress after the resolution of the Working Committee in accordance with the arrangement with the High Command, and this was done on the 19th November, 1956, just 20 years after I had left the Congress. It was in November, 1936, when I had left the Congress on the eve of the General Elections of 1937. While signing the active membership form in November, 1956, of the All India Congress Committee, I was reminded of the circumstances in which I had to leave the Congress. I had been a Congress member from my student days and one of the founders of the Students Congress in 1928 at Lahore. It was in 1936 during their visit to N.W.F.P. that Bulabhai Desai and Patel had suggested to the Provincial Congress Committee in the N.W.F.P. to permit me to stand as an independent for the Provincial Assembly from Kohat-Bannu-Dera Ismail Khan constituency on account of the prevalent circumstances, when there were quite a number of Army votes in my constituency, yet the local Congress Committee of Bannu, with the support of provincial President, had put up a candidate against me, leading to my resignation from the Congress, and contesting the seat as an independent against the Congress candidate. I defeated the Congress candidate, securing four times the number of votes that he polled. It was a painful recollection when I signed a Congress pledge on November, 1956, hardly realising at that time, how unwelcome we would be in the Congress. But at that time, the feelings were different.

With the entry of the prominent Akali Workers into the Congress, the Congress High Command nominated 3 Akalis on the State Election Board for the purpose of cooperation with the Election Board selecting the Congress candidates for the Punjab. They were Giani Kartar Singh, Hukam Singh and I. It was a very arduous duty entrusted to us for the reasons that there were many groups in the Congress with opposite and cross pulls. Moreover in the understanding with the Congress High Command, it had not been decided, how many

seats were to be given to the Akalis. By that time, besides the groups of Partap Singh Kairon, which dominated the Election Board, there was the Gandhi Janta Group headed by Pandit Sri Ram Sharma including Abdul Ghani Dar, Kidar Nath Sehgal and a few others who had also joined the Congress a little earlier. There was another group led by the erstwhile Zamindar League and headed by Chaudhri Sri Chand who had also joined the Congress. Of course, there was the group of Gian Singh Rarewala and his friends, and also a small group of General Mohan Singh. The situation of groups was such that there was a scramble for tickets, but we felt that the background of our joining the Congress was such that we might be given a fair treatment.

Master Tara Singh had actively participated in the negotiations with the Congress High Command before the merger of the Akali Dal. He had met the Prime Minister before the adoption of the merger resolution of the Working Committee of the Akali Dal and had felt satisfied when he returned to the Working Committee at Raqab Ganj Gurdwara, which was awaiting the results. I enquired of him at that time what had transpired during his talks, when I found him in a happy mood, but he would not divulge anything, remarking that he stood for cooperation with the Congress, and would disclose the gist of his talk at Amritsar in the meeting of the General Body. It was at Amritsar that Master Tara Singh divulged the substance of his talk with Pandit Nehru who had settled all issues by saying that Master Tara Singh's honour was his own thereafter; and this satisfied Master Tara Singh to the extent that he declared in the meeting of the 30th September, 1956, that he would not forsake Nehru thereafter and stand by him. But hardly six months had passed before Master Tara Singh was again fighting Nehru again in every sphere. There was reason for it, Nehru let him down badly.

After the merger resolution, I felt that it would be difficult for the Akalis to exert a pull in the Congress, unless we were able to adjust ourselves, and win the confidence of the Congress leadership particularly of Partap Singh Kairon. We had always found extreme antipathy and antagonism between Partap

Singh Kairon and Master Tara Singh and their political careers had run apart, and they had been antagonistic to each other for the last 16 years. They were certainly old colleagues at one time both having been members of the Akali Dal before 1940, when Master Tara Singh was the President and Partap Singh Kairon was the General Secretary. Master Tara Singh, however, considered Partap Singh Kairon a great opportunist, through and through, most unscrupulous in means which he would adopt to achieve his objectives. According to Master Tara Singh, Partap Singh was an extremist and at one time a protagonist of the Sikh State in the thirties of the century, when nobody could visualise and imagine such a future. There had been no love lost between them, and their opposite pulls in the Congress organisation in the Punjab would only affect detrimentally the future of the erstwhile Akalis, who had joined the Congress and were seeking Congress tickets for the General Elections of 1957. Therefore, I suggested to Giani Kartar Singh and Hukam Singh that the only way that the erstwhile Akalis could function honourably in the Congress Organisation and adjust themselves to new conditions and win the confidence of the Congress leadership, was to bring about rapprochement between Partap Singh Kairon and Master Tara Singh and make them work together. It was also obvious that Partap Singh enjoyed the confidence of Pandit Nehru, the then Prime Minister, and U.N. Dhebar, the then President of the Congress. It was difficult—nay impossible—to expect that either would confide in new entrants into the Congress, and prefer them to Partap Singh Kairon. Rather, Nehru and Dhebar would depend more on Partap Singh Kairon to learn and gauge the functioning of the erstwhile Akalis in the Congress Organisation. I told Master Tara Singh also that the differences between the two would end naturally, if a reconciliation could be brought about which would lead to smoother working in the organisation and better understanding between the two groups which ultimately might facilitate the working of the Regional Formula. It was in such circumstances that the two were got together for talks, and Partap Singh Kairon came to the house of Principal Niranjan Singh,

brother of Master Tara Singh, where they deliberated for two hours. The talks were a failure, and both parted greater enemies. This was most unfortunate, and it again proved to be the turning point in the newly entered settlement and understanding between the Akali Dal and the Congress. Thereafter, all the efforts of Master Tara Singh were to degrade Partap Singh in the eyes of Pandit Nehru, whereas Partap Singh Kairon and his group tried to stand in the way of the selection of Master Tara Singh's followers for the Congress tickets. Partap Singh could, and did act, more effectively in the Election Board, where he was also able to win or buy the cooperation of Giani Kartar Singh. Another drawback, under which the Akali entrants in the Congress were labouring particularly three of us, Hukam Singh, Giani Kartar Singh and I in the Provincial Election Board was, that neither Pandit Nehru nor Maulana Azad had committed themselves to the number of the seats in the State Assembly or in the Parliament, that would be given to the erstwhile Akalis. The point had been broached both by Master Tara Singh and other representatives of the Akali Dal, and it was stressed that when the Akali Dal had polled 75% of the Sikh votes in the S.G.P.C. elections only a year before, which reflected the strength of the Akali Dal in the Sikhs, there was no reason why they should not be given 75% of the seats allocated to the Sikhs for the Punjab Assembly; and a similar percentage for the membership of Parliament. Neither Pandit Nehru nor Maulana Azad controverted this claim, thus giving an impression to the Akali leadership that the erstwhile Akalis would be given that number of seats. In fact, both sides were indecisive, and were playing the game of watch and see and did not want break-down.

The meetings of the Provincial Election Board took place at Delhi on the 20th and 21st December, 1956, and at Patiala on 22nd and 23rd, where the merits and demerits of the different applicants were discussed and debated. I found that, whereas there was split amongst the different groups of the old Congressites about candidates, who had applied for the Congress tickets, they were unanimous in their opposition to a large number of Akalis, who had been supporters of Master Tara Singh. Partap

Singh played a very clever and astute game, bringing forward his own candidates in the selection by manoeuvring the different groups. The three of us on the Election Board were in the capacity of advisors or members—we were not sure of our position either, nor was it clarified—and we were treated as foreigners and intruders. This at least, was my feeling. After these deliberations, it began to be given out that the Akalis were going to be given only 17 or 18 seats whereas we expected at least 40. Master Tara Singh seemed very disturbed, and more than once thought loudly of asking us to withdraw. The final meeting of the Provincial Election Board was held on the 28th December at Jullundur, where Giant Kartar Singh remained all the while, expecting an invitation to the meeting, but he was not even called to the deliberations. I was, of course, at Jullundur, and had not been given any invitation. Hukam Singh was at Delhi, and informed us that he was ill. I rang up Master Tara Singh late at night, intimating to him the actual position, and informing him that we were not being taken into confidence about the final list of the selected candidates. He felt insulted, but did not say anything. Next morning, I contacted Chaudhri Ranbir Singh, the then Secretary of the Provincial Election Board, who informed me that the final list was confidential, and that I could later contact the A.I.C.C. The situation was such, that though insulting, there was no coming out of it, nor we had the final picture as to the number of seats, that were going to be allocated to the Akali applicants. But I recollect an interesting illustration of Partap Singh's manoeuvres in the matter of selection of the Akalis. Umrao Singh, Advocate of Patti, was a candidate for the seat which was previously held by Partap Singh Kairon and Partap Singh had shifted his choice to another seat. Umrao Singh was the fittest candidate for the seat, and we were pressing his claim to it. Partap Singh Kairon had appointed Jagan Nath Kaushal a Congress observer for that seat, and got recommendations from him that the best candidate for the seat would be Master Tara Singh's daughter, who was reported to be ambitious and wanted to enter politics. This manoeuvre of Partap Singh Kairon was with the intention of showing the High Command, that he was

not against Master Tara Singh, and was even ready to support his daughter, but in fact, it was with the intention of eliminating Umrao Singh, who had fought against him in the 1952 General Elections, and had been defeated by only a few hundred votes. The entire Election Board was agreeable to the nomination of Master Tara Singh's daughter, but Master Tara Singh refused such nomination knowing it well that this wedge was being brought in to create a split in his party. All our efforts failed to get Umrao Singh nominated, and Partap Singh was able to bring an outsider, Narain Singh Shahbazpur, as a Congress nominee for this seat.

The venue of selection of the candidates shifted from the Provincial Election Board to the Central Election Board, and the whole month of January, 1957, was devoted to this. It was a very interesting spectacle, though painful and shocking, to find the most prominent people in the public life squatting and struggling in the lawns of 7, Janter Manter Road, the office of the All India Congress Committee, to have a peep into the room where the Central Election Board was holding a meeting to select the candidates. The scramble for the tickets was extreme, and the demoralisation of the applicants was no less. Master Tara Singh was at Delhi, very anxious to know where the Akali entrants stood. He had been all the while under the impression, from his talks with the members of the High Command earlier, that he would be consulted not only with regard to the selection of the Akali entrants and their nomination for tickets to different constituencies, but also with regard to others. It was for this reason that he was hitting Partap Singh Kairon right and left, in order to damage his leadership and bring forward some other leader. But this was not to be. The result of wrong and incorrect strategy was, that the Akali entrants were able to secure only 22 seats for Provincial Assembly and 3 seats for the Parliament. This was a shock to Master Tara Singh and to the rest of the Akali leaders. But we had gone sufficiently ahead, and it seemed difficult to withdraw. Master Tara Singh suggested this in the Working Committee, and said that we could yet withdraw our support and make our own candidates stand, but the consensus of

opinion in the Working Committee was against it. We had neither any programme nor a manifesto or a slogan to fight the Congress in the General Elections. It was hardly possible for us to contest against the Congress when we had given our pledges to support it. Hukam Singh and I suggested that we would withdraw our own candidature, but the Working Committee would not agree to this. The result was that these 25 candidates fought on the Congress tickets.

Knowing very well that the Working Committee of the Akali Dal could not withdraw from its collaboration with the Congress, nor change its stand having once amended the constitution, whereby it had confined itself to cultural, educational, religious and economic fields, Master Tara Singh, a fighter as he was, would not take his defeat lying down. He announced that he would nominate candidates in his individual capacity to fight against the Congress and, as such, he announced the names of 23 persons to contest the elections. This was the end of the Akali-Congress collaboration, since Master Tara Singh had again changed his stand. This left the field clear for Partap Singh Kairon, who held sway for the next 8 years, till his demise. All this while the Akalis had only to struggle for survival, and the Sikhs had to march on.

References and Sources

1. "Nehru, A Political Biography" by Michael Breacher (London, O.U.P. 1959) p. 386.
2. Notes from my diary.
3. Ibid.

THE REGIONAL FORMULA : ITS LIQUIDATION

IX

There was sore disappointment in Akali circles because of the manner in which the Akali Dal had been treated in the deal, and its confidence abused in the allocation of seats. Master Tara Singh, in a press conference on February 14, 1957, said: "Now I am not bound by the Akali-Congress compromise because the Congress had dishonoured us. The members of the Congress High Command had assured us of giving representation to the Akalis in accordance with their position amongst the Sikhs, and had promised that the list of the Congress nominees for the General Elections would be finalised in consultation with me, but these assurances were not respected. How ridiculous to consider our position amongst the Sikhs to be such as to entitle us to not more than 1/3rd seats in the Vidhan Sabha which the Congress has allowed us."¹ He bitterly complained that the list had been finalised by Partap Singh Kairon, Gian Gurmukh Singh Mussafir and Brish Bhan, but said, that he was not in favour of breaking away without a more crucial issue.

The Central Congress leadership, by this insult to the Shiromani Akali Dal in not according it a fair deal, lost another important opportunity, when it could bring the Sikhs into the general stream of national thinking, and achieve emotional integration by removing the vestiges of a communal

approach by giving their representatives a due place in Punjab politics. They again ignored an important organisation and its leaders, representing a dynamic minority, and gave more importance and weight to an individual, Partap Singh Kairon, who otherwise might have been more useful, as an agent to carry out the policies of the Congress in the Punjab. This affected adversely the future relations of the Sikhs with the Congress. How much better it would have been, if efforts had been made to bring Partap Singh and Master Tara Singh to a joint working, failing which decidedly Master Tara Singh should have been preferred, as he alone could deliver the goods on behalf of the Sikhs. Master Tara Singh did not make any attempt to rescind the resolution of merger of the Akali Dal with the Congress, nor did he repudiate the understanding. He, however, sponsored independents against the Congress candidates in order to keep alive the issue, that the Congress leadership had overlooked the claims of the Akali Dal to a just and fair number of seats. And he succeeded in this when his nominees, as independent candidates were able to secure 23.3% of the total votes polled in the Punjabi Region, as against 47.6% secured by Congress candidates. No doubt, none succeeded. There were certainly critics of this step taken by Master Tara Singh. The most prominent of them was Hukam Singh, his erstwhile lieutenant, who said in a press statement on March 30, 1957, that, "It is not honesty to assert now that Akali Dal never intended to eschew politics." He admitted further that the demand for the Punjabi Suba had not been met but that the Akali representatives had come to an arrangement and accepted the Regional Scheme instead, and added, "Master Tara Singh himself had piloted the proposal and had guided deliberation. The whole community had reconciled itself to this decision, and it was in the interest of the country, and also of the community."² At that time, Hukam Singh could have hardly imagined that Partap Singh Kairon would be foremost in liquidating the Regional Formula.

Partap Singh Kairon was elected as a leader of the Congress Assembly Party on April 3, 1957, and formed the Congress Ministry, taking two erstwhile Akalis Gian Singh Rarewala

and Gian Kartar Singh in his Cabinet. The Ministry had hardly started functioning, when the Arya Samaj Section of the Hindus embarked on their so-called Hindi Raksha agitation in order to defeat the working and functioning of the Regional Formula. The Arya Samajists had a very large number of educational institutions under their management and control, and they had not implemented the provisions of the Sachhar Formula during the preceding 7 years in their institutions, and no action had been taken against them. They had not even reconciled themselves to the Sachhar Formula; the application of the Pepsu Formula in the Regional Scheme made them announce their determination to defeat the Regional Scheme totally. This attitude should have been strongly condemned and boldly faced by the Government at that time. But efforts were made by the Congress Ministry to placate them by promising reconsideration of a settled matter. This emboldened the organisers to take to an agitational approach on the language question by defeating the working of the different provisions in the Regional Scheme. Swami Atma Nand, an octogenarian Sannyasi, was appointed dictator of the movement, who launched a Dharna (continuous sitting) at the Secretariat on the 30th April, 1957, announcing that the following demands had to be conceded, before the Hindi Raksha Samiti would stop its agitation:—

1. That there should be one Formula for the whole State.

2. That the medium of instruction should be left entirely to the choice of the parents.

3. There should be no compulsion for the teaching of two languages, and the second language at any particular stage.

4. Hindi should replace English at all levels of administration.

5. All the Government notifications at the district level and below should be bilingual.

6. That applications should be allowed to be submitted in any language and the reply should be in the same language.

7. The office record at the district level and below

should be in both scripts."

These demands were contrary to the provisions of the Sachhar Formula and, more so, to the basic features of the Pepsu Formula, which applied to the area of the erstwhile Pepsu. They were opposed to the spirit of understanding arrived at, on the basic factor, that Punjabi would be the language of the Punjabi Region at the official level, and at the district courts level, and it would have the same status as the regional language had in other States. The demands clearly impinged upon the unilingual character of the Punjabi area, even to the extent of the district level in all official, educational and administrative sphere. The Punjab Ministry, instead of handling the situation boldly and strongly, and announcing their determination to implement the Regional Scheme both in letter and spirit, began appeasing the agitators by promising them many concessions. It was proclaimed that the movement would be met and faced in a 'non-violent manner', and the Congress Minister went barefooted to these five Sannyasis sitting 'Dharna' at the Secretariat, begging them with folded hands to suspend the movement. What a contrast it was to the steps taken to counter the Punjabi Suba movement a year earlier, when the police was directed to go inside the precincts of Sri Darbar Sahib to beat the Akali workers! Even the officials harped on the tune of appeasement. Nukul Sen, the then Chief Secretary, said to the press that these Sannyasi agitators fighting for Hindi Raksha and a change in the Regional Scheme were 'essentially good people'. These efforts at appeasement were, however, not successful and jathas of Arya Samajists and others started touring the different districts defying the restrictions and collecting funds for the movement.

The movement had hardly been going on for some time, when Government conceded that all the Government notifications at the district level and below would be bilingual; that applications would be allowed to be submitted in either of the two languages, and replies would be given in the same language; and that the records up to the district level would be maintained in both the scripts. Nehru also announced that

the matter essentially was an educational matter in regard to the compulsion for teaching either of the two languages to be decided in consultation with the educationists. In furtherance of this, the Governor, on the advice of the Congress Chief Minister, appointed a committee of Jai Chander Vidyalkar and Bhai Jodh Singh, "to tour the State, to meet important persons and to sound public opinion for promoting good relations between the communities and to devise ways and means to bring about normalcy in the State." This was a subtle move on the part of the Congress Ministry to unsettle the Regional Formula.

Before the appointment of the Committee, Mohan Lal, the then Finance Minister, wrote to Swami Atma Nand on the 6th June conceding that, "even in that part of the State where Punjabi is spoken predominantly, free use of Hindi has been accepted," and begging therein that Satyagraha should be given up.³ These moves of the Congress Ministry, in whittling down the provisions of Regional Scheme in all its essentials, evoked a strong criticism from Master Tara Singh who, in a statement to the press on May 13, 1957, said: "The Regional Formula was evolved as a result of a settlement between the Sikhs and the Government of India. At the time it was agreed that the Sachhar Formula and Pepsu Formula both might continue in their respective areas, till a better atmosphere prevails... The aim of the Arya Samaj agitation is not only to suppress Punjabi and Gurmukhi script but also to crush the Sikh spirit in order to demoralise them and keep them under their heel.... Let me state clearly that I agreed to the Sachhar Formula at the time of settlement with the Government as a temporary measure, and I am bound by it. But I never liked it, and the Shiromani Akali Dal had never agreed to it before the settlement with the Government. So this may continue for the present, but it is not possible to continue both the Sachhar Formula and the Pepsu Formula for all time to come, for the areas which they cover are intermingled."⁴ This was a first counter demand for the Pepsu Formula for the entire Punjabi Region in reply to the demand of the Hindi Raksha Samiti for Hindi for the whole State of the Punjab.

The 'non-violent attitude' of the Congress Ministry towards the movement emboldened Swami Atma Nand to pose the following questions in his reply to the letter of Pandit Mohan Lal :

"(a) Is it a fact that the Pepsu Language Formula is being forced on the unwilling sections of the population ?

(b) Are the children of Jullundur Division being coerced to take up a medium which is not of their choice ? Is the freedom of choice of medium not being denied, as amply proved by the communal, narrow-minded and undemocratic policy of the Government ?

(c) Is Gurmukhi being forced down the throats of the people of Haryana, which has been declared a so-called Hindi region against the principle of democracy and fairness ?

(d) Is it a fact that what has been denied to more than 40% people of Jullundur and Pepsu divisions has been forcibly thrust on Haryana people for the sake of 5% of the population ?

(e) Is it a fact that in the administrative set-up, about 75% of the people, who do not know any particular language, are being forced to adopt it overnight, without an interim period and against all the fundamentals of democracy."²

The stand taken clearly showed that the objective of the Hindi Raksha Samiti was to undo and unsettle the agreement that had been arrived at in evolving the Regional Formula. The fanatic section of the Arya Samajists was not the only sponsors of this agitation, but it found support in Hindu publicmen of eminence at the time. Pandit Nanak Chand, a prominent Hindu leader of pre-partitioned Punjab, in an article in "The Tribune" in its issue of 11th June, 1957, wrote : "Similarly Puniab claims Hindi as a regional language along with Punjabi. In a particular region there might be more than one regional language. It is not necessary that a particular State may be named after its regional language. Where a particular province, State or Region is bilingual or trilingual, the question arises which of the two or more than two languages used in the State should be the official language of the

State, then the trouble starts as it has started in the Punjab. The quarrel has assumed a sinister aspect on account of its assuming a communal colour..." The learned Pandit safely forgot that the communal turn to the events had not been given by the Akali Dal or the Sikhs but by the Arya Samajists and the other fanatic sections of the Hindus, who had started an anti-Sikh movement to suppress Punjabi and the Gurmukhi script. Another prominent Arya Samajist, Principal Suraj Bhan, later appointed Vice-Chancellor of Punjab University, wrote in "The Tribune" in its issue of the 23rd June, 1957, in support of the agitation, "The demands of the Arya Samajists are just and reasonable and had never impinged on the fundamental rights of the Sikhs or the status of the Punjabi language. All the world over, the choice of medium of instruction for the children is left to the parents. This right is not conceded to the parents under the Pepsu Formula. It is hedged round with certain conditions which in actual practice are proving so irksome for the parents. Again, more than 90% of the Hindu population of the State cannot read or write Gurmukhi. As soon as the Regional Formula is implemented by one stroke of pen, almost the whole adult Hindi population of Jullundur division will be rendered illiterate and their number is in lakhs." How one wishes that the learned Vice-Chancellor had appreciated that this 'illiteracy' and ignorance of the Punjabi language of these lakhs was advised and deliberate due to communal outlook and feelings. In fact, this communal temper had been generated by such writings that official use of Punjabi even at the district level was opposed tooth and nail.

The tragic aspect of all this was not only the weak and vacillating policy of the Congress Ministry in actively acquiescing in the whittling down of the provisions of the Regional Formula, but all efforts were made to appease the agitators at the Government level by giving pronounced concessions. Another sad irony of the situation was that the Sikh Ministers in the Cabinet, like Giani Kartar Singh started placating the agitators by offering concessions. Giani Kartar Singh, while addressing a conference on the 4th July, 1957, said, "That no Regional language can challenge the status of the national

language". He should have been well aware that, according to the policy of the Government of India pronounced so often, Hindi had no place in the area of the Regional language in non-Hindi speaking States. Gian Singh Rarewala in a statement to the press on the same day expressed a wish that there should be negotiated settlement of the language question, when he had been a party to such a negotiated settlement only a year before, which had resulted in evolving the Regional Formula. The fact that this settlement had given better position to Hindi in the Punjabi Region than any where else was admitted by U.N. Dhebar, the then President of the Indian National Congress, when in a statement to the press he said, "Any fair-minded person can see the benefit of the Regional Formula, yet it is surprising that those who claim to be the lovers of Hindi refused to see the great achievement that the Regional Formula will bring to the cause of Hindi."⁶ It was admitted on all hands that the demand of the Hindi Raksha Samiti ran counter to the provisions both of the Sachhar Formula and the Pepsu Formula, which were parts of the solution. They were also opposed to the spirit and intent of the understanding arrived at about the basic principles, that Punjabi shall be the language of the Punjabi Region in offices, courts and other administrative affairs at the district level, and it would have that status which other regional languages enjoy in their territories. But no attention was paid to the dangers that were patent in a movement of the nature. Even the provincial Congress leaders were openly espousing the cause and demands of the Hindi Raksha Samiti. Virendra, a prominent Arya Samajist and Congress leader, strongly supported the movement, and announced at a public meeting at Ludhiana on July 5, 1957, that the Hindi Samiti demand must be conceded before the movement could be suspended. Nevertheless, Chief Minister Kairon in a statement to the press on the 10th July, reiterated that the movement would be faced 'in a non-violent manner' and no force would be used. Another Minister of State, Yash Pal, resigned ostensibly on the issue, though he later denied it, and got himself nominated on the committee appointed by the Governor on August 8, 1957, to negotiate with the nominees

of the Samiti for a new settlement. Other nominees for the purpose were Gian Singh Rarewala, Amar Nath Vidyalkar, Brij Bhan and Rao Birender Singh. The Sikhs were astounded that they were not being consulted, and that negotiations were being started on an issue which had been finally settled on the basis of the Regional Formula which should thereafter have been implemented fully, and for the efficient implementation of which the Shiromani Akali Dal had sent many of its members to the Congress. The attitude of the Congress Ministry further emboldened the Satyagrahis, who in large numbers, under the leadership of one Karpatri, a Sanatnist Swami, rushed to the main gate of the Secretariat on 10th July 1957, scaled the barbed wire fencing, broke the wooden portion on the sides, and got on the top gate with the Om flag in his hands, shouting anti-Sikh slogans; yet no arrest was made. The situation had come to such pitch, that it forced Master Tara Singh to make a pathetic appeal on 15th July, 1957, in which amongst other things, he said, "I want to address a few words to my Hindu brothers. They should remove from their minds the wish or the hope to subdue the Sikhs. One soils one's own mind by entertaining such an evil intention, which results in one's own ruin, regardless of one's being able to ruin another or not. I want to assure my Hindu brothers that if the Sikhs think or try to harm or annihilate them, I will fight my community too, and would not hesitate to risk my life in the struggle. I am a follower of Guru Teg Bahadur who offered his head in the service and protection of the Hindu Dharma. I am a follower of Guru Gobind Singh who created the Khalsa Panth in defence of Hindu Dharma and sacrificed all for it." The appeal had, however, no effect, and the propaganda against the Sikhs continued with greater intensity, and there were several instances of sacrilege in sacred places of Sikhs. This forced Master Tara Singh to write in the issue of "The Tribune" dated the 8th August, 1957, that the movement was anti-Sikh in character, and quoted instances where sacrileges had been committed. He further said, "Add to this the mischief of throwing cigarette boxes in the holy tanks, and tearing the Sukhmani Sahib Gutka and spreading

its leaves in the Bazaar, and getting the Keshas of a Sikh boy cut while he was asleep." The Shiromani Akali Dal, in its meeting on August 10, 1957, warned the Punjab Government that it had no authority to reopen the Punjabi issue in view of the Akali-Government compromise and settlement, and further called upon the Punjabis in general and the Sikhs in particular to observe complete Hartal on August 22, 1957, in protest against the reopening of the question. This evoked a tremendous response, and there was complete closure of Sikh shops and business, indicative of the fact that there was a strong reaction among the Sikhs masses on account of the Hindi Raksha movement. Master Tara Singh declined an invitation to meet Dr. Gopi Chand Bhargava who had earlier been taken into the cabinet to appease the Arya Samaj section, and to explore an agreed solution. The Shiromani Akali Dal supported the stand of Master Tara Singh in its Working Committee meeting on September 8, 1957.

The damage, however, had been done to the Regional Formula by the concessions given by the Punjab Government. The hartal observed by the Sikhs on the 22nd August was a clear indication of the situation that had been created. Therefore, Prime Minister Nehru, while addressing the Parliamentary meeting on September 14, 1957, conceded that the agitation of the Arya Samajists had done a great harm to the unity of India and would disintegrate Punjab "whether it succeeds or fails". How true this prophecy proved, when only seven years later the Punjab was split up into two States on account of the communal activities of the Arya Samajist section of the Hindus.

Happily, the negotiations initiated by Gopi Chand Bhargava broke down, and no settlement could be announced because of the active opposition of the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Sikhs. All the same, there was general impression that Samiti leaders had been assured of more concessions in the Regional Formula, when their leader Ghanysham Dass Gupta announced after his talks with the President Rajendra Prasad on the 3rd October, 1957, that he was satisfied. The Satyagraha, however, continued

with all its venom, and scurrilous attack on the Sikhs in general, and sacrileges in religious places of the Sikhs in particular continued. It was on the 23rd December that Pandit Pant, the then Home Minister, visited Chandigarh and again appealed to the Samiti leaders to give up the Satyagraha. He was interviewed at Delhi by Ghanysham Dass Gupta, the Samiti head. In the meantime, the Chief Minister Kairon announced that he had ordered the release of all old, infirm, sick and women Hindi satyagrahi prisoners unconditionally, and had also ordered the systematic release of others. The seven-month-old Hindi agitation was, therefore, suspended under the direction of Ghanysham Dass Gupta, who stated that he would continue his talks with the authorities for the resolution of the language dispute in the Punjab.

Giving reasons for such a suspension, he said that he was satisfied that the Government had made a gesture of goodwill in ordering the unconditional release of all volunteers in connection with the Satyagraha and added, "that I have no doubt that all the concomitants of goodwill and change of heart are to follow, and all issues will be finally settled. I hope and trust that we will be in a position to usher in that era of peace and goodwill in which the combined efforts of all will produce that unity of heart which will be a source of strength not only to the border State of the Punjab but also to the whole of India." The response of the Chief Minister to this was instantaneous, and he in a statement to the press on December 28, said, "This agitation has stood all this while in the way of peaceful and fruitful discussion, as no Government of the State or at the Centre or for that matter, other affected interests, could be expected to negotiate in such a vitiated atmosphere. The main hurdle is over, and I have no hesitation in responding to Mr. Gupta's sentiments that all concomitants of goodwill flow as a resolution of the atmosphere now developing."

It was given out from the knowledgeable sources of the Hindi Raksha Samiti that, with the blessing of the Central leadership, there had been a covert understanding between Chief Minister Kairon and Samiti leaders on the language

issue. What that understanding was, is not known, but the subsequent events definitely indicated, that thereafter there was a slow and steady liquidation of the Regional Formula in all its salient features. That there was such an understanding was borne out by the statements of prominent persons concerned after the suspension of the movement. Narinder, a prominent leader, stated immediately after the suspension of the movement that, "the basis of the withdrawal of the agitation is a compromise formula on the issue involved."⁷ Narindra, another Arya Samaj leader and a prominent Congressite, said in a statement after release on December 28, 1957, at Patiala that the Hindi agitation had been suspended on the basis of a "a private assurance" given to the leaders of the movement and the suspension was only a change in the mode of agitation.⁸

Ghanysham Dass Gupta had an interview with the Home Minister Pant, on the 22nd February, 1958, whereafter, in a statement to the press, he said that he had placed suggestions before the Home Minister as to how the demand of the Arya Samaj, to remove compulsion of language could be met. He added that, judging by the trend of talks, he could say that it might not be necessary to revive the Satyagraha. When the Home Minister, in reply to a question in the Lok Sabha on the 3rd March, 1958, said that "no assurance was given to those who conducted the Hindi agitation in the Punjab," Shri Gupta clarified this stand of the Home Minister in a statement asking the Arya Samajists not to be perturbed over the reply, as he found no change in the attitude of the Home Minister on the language issue, and added, "I can say that he is as earnest as ever, and there is no reason for the Arya Samaj and its sympathisers to get perturbed." This all established that there was a covert move by the Punjab Ministry to sabotage the Regional Formula.

Another interesting indication of the delaying and dilatory tactics of the Punjab Congress Ministry in the implementation of the Regional Formula was that the Regional Committees were constituted in November, 1957, seven months after the inauguration of the Assembly, and it was then that the rules and

regulations were notified. These promulgated rules prescribed the conduct of business in the Punjabi Regional Committee, but did not put a restriction on the use of language other than Punjabi. It was open to any member to transmit any motion, amendment, withdrawal, in Hindi or English, and the conduct of correspondence with the office could be in the Hindi language or any other language. The concerned members were also entitled to demand that the conduct of business transacted by the committee should be in Hindi. This, again, was a clear contravention of the spirit and understanding in the Regional Formula, about the use of Punjabi in the demarcated Punjabi Region. All this perturbed the minds of the Sikhs at large, and reflected the lack of enthusiasm about the working of the Regional Formula, thus taking the life and substance out of it. In spite of this, the Shiromani Akali Dal did not make any move to make an agitational approach to these lapses of the Government, awaiting meanwhile appreciation of the feelings of the Sikhs.

Another factor that added to the determination of Chief Minister Kairon to torpedo the Regional Formula was the inner faction in the Congress Assembly party, and the group that started opposing him. He felt that it had the inspiration and support of Master Tara Singh and Baldev Singh, who had by then been ousted from power. The serious split in the Congress Assembly party had come to the surface when a charge sheet was given to the High Command by the dissident group led by Prabodh Chander, complaining of corruption, nepotism and maladministration on the part of the Chief Minister. This split had started much earlier, but the first indication was given by the Chief Minister himself while speaking in the Vidhan Sabha on March 18, 1958, when he said, "that there seems to be a move to oust me by certain members of my party and of the opposition." The opposition leader, Pandit Sri Ram Sharma, admitted this in his speech on the 27th March, 1958, and claimed that there were 45 members sitting on the Congress benches, who, if relieved of the rod of discipline, would join the 36 members of the opposition against the Chief Minister. The Congress High Command became

very much concerned at the situation and took up the matter of the charge sheet, and held several sittings for its consideration. Ultimately it came to the finding that the 25 charges against the Chief Minister could be put in three categories, viz., charges of corruption, charges about misuse of power in the interest of his family and friends, and charges regarding irregularity in the administration. The Congress Working Committee brushed aside the charges of corruption, stating that they had not been substantiated, but observed that some of the charges in the second category had been established, since improprieties had been committed. It also found that charges pertaining to irregularities were substantiated by the dissidents, and ultimately set out its conclusion thus, "We have discussed all the matters with S. Partap Singh Kairon fully. In regard to some of the matters relating to his family or administration, he has told us that he has no personal knowledge and so the reply that he has given is the reply supplied to him by the persons intimately concerned. He spoke to us frankly and fully with regard to these matters, and he has offered to resign from his High Office if this be considered necessary. It is not for us, however, in view of the circumstances and the views he has expressed above, to accept or reject the offer of his resignation. It is for the Congress party and the legislature to indicate in the normal way whether they had confidence in him as a Chief Minister or not, and an early meeting of the party should be held for the purpose."

Kairon knew that the dissident group had the active support of most of the members of the erstwhile Akalis led by Gian Kartar Singh. His bitterness led later to efforts to create a crisis in the State to oust the erstwhile Akalis from the Congress fold in order to keep the situation tense ; in this he could only succeed if he could wreck the Regional Formula, whereby he would not only please Hindu legislators but drive the Akali Dal to a conflict with the Congress, and thus create a situation where he could act freely. He had made a move in this regard earlier. The first meeting of the Punjabi Regional Committee had been called on the 11th November, 1958, when the election for the Chairman was held. He had sponsored

Darbara Singh for the office, but finding that most of the members including the erstwhile Akalis favoured Seth Ram Nath, he withdrew his nominee, allowing the unanimous election of the latter. However, he soon had his revenge, when he declared on behalf of the Punjab Government that he could not permit the Chairman of the Regional Committee to have any special status or even a separate room in the Vidhan Sabha building or any establishment under him. He put his own interpretation on the rule declaring that the Chairman of the Regional Committee was no better than a Chairman of another committee of the House. Gurdial Singh Dhillon, the then Speaker of the Assembly and a lieutenant of Kairon, endorsed this interpretation on the floor of the House. This to all intents and purposes made the Regional Committee an unimportant and ineffective organisation. How cleverly Kairon managed to win the Hindu opinion to his favour, and drove the Akali Dal to a show-down with the Congress, was apparent from this move.

A meeting of the Congress Assembly party was called on the 5th June, 1958, in pursuance of the conclusion of the Congress Working Committee in its meeting of the 19th May, 1958. The supporters of Partap Singh began making vigorous efforts to woo and win every member of the Congress Legislative Party by every possible method in order to secure an overwhelming majority, which would wash out the loss of prestige, he had suffered as a result of the findings of the Central Parliamentary Board. The greatest surprise, however, was that those high-ups in the Congress circles gave their support in favour of the confidence motion, in spite of the clear finding of the Congress Parliamentary Board which had held him guilty. It was indeed interesting to find, Nehru coming personally to the aid of Partap Singh to win him the confidence motion coming up on the June 5, 1958. Gurmukh Singh Musafir, an important Congress leader and the then President of the Pradesh Congress, did not have happy relations with Partap Singh, yet he was sent from Delhi to Chandigarh two days earlier than the crucial day, to declare with all fanfare, that he had come to support Partap Singh's election as a

leader of the party. The defeat of the no-confidence motion became a settled fact when Nehru gave a clean chit to Partap Singh in a specially convened press conference on the 4th June, when he dismissed outright as "foolish, frivolous and absurd" the charges of corruption levelled against Partap Singh by "his political opponents". He said further that a vote of confidence had nothing to do with the charges this way or that way, "We (Congress Parliamentary Board) have disposed of those charges. So a vote of confidence is simply in the normal sense of the word. If people want him a leader, let them have him, and if not, let them not have him." Nehru further said that remarks of the Congress Parliamentary Board about Partap Singh's "constructive responsibility for the actions of his relatives was perhaps somewhat confusing." When asked whether constructive responsibility had not been held, he said, "actually both these words are not proper and not suitable or appropriate under the circumstances." Nehru safely forgot that the charges levelled had not been sponsored or brought against by the members of the opposition, but by the members of the Congress party themselves. What motivated Nehru to go to such length to support Partap Singh became apparent subsequently when later he initiated his policy of 'secularisation' as he called it. It was openly announced at the time that he had been given a free hand thereafter in the State. Partap Singh announced then that he would reshuffle his cabinet, dropping some of the senior members, hinting at Giani Kartar Singh, an erstwhile Akali. It seemed, he had been given permission to do so at the outset, but the Congress High Command later had second thoughts about it and advised him not to drop Giani Kartar Singh as it would have a serious reaction on the policy of the Akali Dal. Giani Kartar Singh was not dropped, but something worse and more insulting was done. He was deprived of the important portfolio of Revenue and Local Bodies and made a Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Games on the 19th August, 1958. In spite of this and a protest from the Akali ranks, Giani Kartar Singh stuck to his office.

Having got the necessary green signal, Partap Singh Kairon

began an obvious policy to sponsor conflict between the Akali Dal and the Congress in the political field. He thus found a way to implement the understanding with the Samiti leaders to sabotage the Regional Formula, which was the only way to widen the gulf between the Congress and the Akali Dal. Accordingly, speaking at a function at Hoshiarpur, Partap Singh Kairon asked the Punjabis to be broadminded and accommodating. He declared that Hindi should be the main language of the Punjab and India, and said, "In the Punjab, Punjabi comes after Hindi. Urdu and English should be retained. Indians must learn one foreign language, then why not English. Hindi will be the language above the district level of the State. At the district level it will be supreme in the Hindi Region as Punjabi in the Punjabi Region."⁸

It was generally held in those days that Chief Minister Kairon had decided to change the texture of Sikh institutions in order to eliminate the breeding ground of Sikh culture, traditions and Sikh spirit, and create a more 'secular' concept, but few imagined that he would be so bold as to do that, however, much, it would please Prime Minister Nehru. Therefore, it came as a surprise when a suggestion came from him, while he was addressing a meeting in Putlighar Girls' High School at Amritsar on August 3, 1958, that all private schools should discard communal and sectional labels failing which the Government would open more schools. Thereafter, there came a change in the educational policy of the State which took over as many institutions of the kind as possible on the plea of nationalising them. This was a subtle move to 'secularise' the education in the State.

The Shiromani Akali Dal had taken no step to agitate for Punjabi Suba as it did not want to embarrass the Government during its involvement in the Hindi agitation. But its apprehension was coming true that the Regional Formula was being killed by the policies adopted. In spite of this, the Akali Dal in a two-day conference at Moga on the 22nd and the 23rd March, 1958, reiterated its stand that it would work for the achievement of the following objectives only:

- (1) Implementation of the Regional Formula as agreed

upon.

(ii) Setting up of a separate Punjabi Department for the development of the Punjabi language and literature.

(iii) To get the complaints of the Sikh employees redressed."

It was on June 14, 1958, however, that Master Tara Singh, while addressing a gathering at Amritsar, said that compelled by circumstances, he had given up the demand for Punjabi Suba and agreed to the Regional Formula, but that he had found that the attitude of the Government was forcing him again to give preference to the Punjabi Suba over the Regional Formula. He, however, condemned the idea of Sikh State, saying, "I have never wanted a Sikh State, nor am I in favour of it," and added, "I do not want to usurp the rights of another community. I want the freedom of the Sikhs."⁹ He, however, waited till the middle of September, 1958, nearly 2 years after the settlement, pleading and entertaining all the while, for the full implementation of the Regional Formula, and it was on September 16, 1958, that, at a reception given to Rachhpal Singh on his election as the President of the local Akali Dal at Delhi, he announced that the Regional Formula in the Punjab had not been satisfactorily implemented and that, "I will be compelled to reopen the demand for Punjabi Suba."

The first Punjabi Suba conference thereafter was held on October 12, 1958, at Amritsar, where the plan for its attainment was announced by Sant Fateh Singh who had, by that time, come to prominence at the Senior-Vice President of the Shiromani Akali Dal and trusted lieutenant of Master Tara Singh. Addressing the Conference, he said that their demand was only for a Punjabi Suba wherein they should be able to develop the Punjabi language and culture and protect their religion. He complained that the Government had taken the life from the Regional Formula, and handed over the corpse to them. He deplored the inordinate delay in the implementation of the Formula, whereby the Sikhs had been completely disillusioned. Master Tara Singh also addressed the conference in the same strain, making an offer that he was ready to accept arbitration on the issue that the Regional Formula had

not been implemented and that the Government had backed out of the settlement. This evoked no response from the Government, nor was the offer for arbitration accepted, but the Congress leaders like Darbara Singh gave statement that the Formula had been implemented and that "stages have been covered to switch over to Punjabi and Hindi at the proper level of administration." Nobody was made aware of, what stages had been covered during the previous two years when, according to the declaration of Chief Minister Kairon, Hindi was to have precedence over Punjabi above the district level in the Punjabi Region. It could not be denied that no regional Committees had been constituted till November, 1957, and no sooner were they constituted than the Speaker of the Vidhan Sabha was inspired to give a verdict that their status was no better than that of the special committees of the House. The Chairman of the Regional Committee was not given any position or status and was refused any establishment or staff, which led the Chairman of the Punjabi Regional Committee to resign in disgust. The language settlement was not only not implemented, but was made the subject of review by the so-called Two-Man Goodwill Committee which took upon itself the function of the Language Committee. It made recommendations incorporating fundamental changes in the language settlement. Another 26-Man Committee was appointed by the Punjab Government to examine the recommendations with a view to solve the language problem, thus clearly indicating that the language issue had been reopened, and the settlement no longer stood. The Shiromani Akali Dal was not consulted or contacted during all this time. The sequence of events, and the statement of the persons responsible for the implementation of the Regional Formula pointed to one irresistible conclusion, that the Punjab Government had obviously unsettled the matter to satisfy the Hindi Raksha Samiti leaders and the Arya Samajist section of the Hindus. Under the circumstances, could it be said that Master Tara Singh was not justified in declaring that the Regional Formula was dead, and the Punjabi Suba issue very much alive? In this regard, the findings of the Das Commission appointed by the Government of India on the

30th October, 1961, in continuation of the declaration of the Prime Minister in Parliament "to enquire into the general question of discrimination, and examine any charges of alleged differential treatment to or grievances of the Sikhs," did not controvert and contradict when it said in its Report that the 'Nationalist' Sikhs had argued that the Formula had not been implemented and that constituted a discrimination against the Sikhs, and added that the case put forward by the Nationalist Sikhs regarding the non-implementation of the Regional Formula cannot be said to amount to discrimination against the Sikhs "although it implies that certain decisions taken by the Government, which they approved of being in their favour, are not being implemented fast enough and therefore, their grievance that they are not getting the fruits of their victory, we feel, is not a case of discrimination at all so as to come within the purview of our commission." The Commission quoted an article of the "Jathedar", a Punjabi daily of Shiromani Akali Dal, of October 21, 1961, which said, "that if the Regional Formula had been implemented in the spirit in which it had been conceived by the Central leadership under the guidance of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, then no further trouble would have arisen in the Punjab." All this definitely indicated that Master Tara Singh was forced to take up Punjabi Suba issue again only after declaring the settlement of 1956 to be dead.

No sooner had Master Tara Singh made such a declaration in early October, 1958 than the entire Punjab Government machinery was moved to oust him from the Presidentship of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. Giani Kartar Singh, as stated earlier, had been deprived of his important portfolios on August 19, 1958, on account of his part in the no-confidence motion. Thereafter, he made efforts to ingratiate himself with the Chief Minister Kairon by agreeing to become his instrument in ousting Master Tara Singh from the Presidentship. Chief Minister Kairon could have found no better henchman than the Giani for the purpose. Giani Kartar Singh was successful in coalescing all the opposition groups including 22 Communists with his own group by pro-

missing them important offices in the executive of the S.G.P.C. and thereby he was able to defeat Master Tara Singh by 77 votes to 74 votes on the 16th November, 1958. The fact that he was also inspired by the Centre in this regard, was borne out by the interview which Giani Kartar Singh had with Home Minister Pant immediately after, i.e., on the 20th November, 1958, when he must have posted the Home Minister with the situation. The defeat of Master Tara Singh was applauded by the entire Punjab Hindu press and declared as a vote against the Punjabi Suba issue. No doubt, Master Tara Singh had been defeated and a dominee of the Congress Ministry had been installed as the President of the S.G.P.C., but it was apprehended in Congress circles that Master Tara Singh would be able to regain his position, unless measures were taken to keep him out of power in the S.G.P.C. For that purpose, the Sikh Gurdwara Amendment Bill was resuscitated on the plea that representation was to be given to the Sikhs of the erstwhile Pepsu area on the S.G.P.C. after the merger. The objective was certainly laudable and the amendments were required, but it should have been appreciated that the general elections to the S.G.P.C. were only a year ahead, and amendments could be made thereafter. But the danger to the Congressite President of the S.G.P.C. was such, that the amendments in the Gurdwara Act could not wait. Therefore, it was proposed, that the executive of the S.G.P.C. along with the then 13 members of the interim Gurdwara Board of Pepsu Area, and also the then 12 members co-opted from the Pepsu area in the S.G.P.C., would nominate 35 additional members of the Board (S.G.P.C.) to stuff it with reliable persons to keep Master Tara Singh out. A delegation headed by the Congressite President of the S.G.P.C. waited upon the Chief Minister to press him to call a special session of the Assembly for early passage of the Gurdwara Amendment Bill on the above lines. The Chief Minister was responsive, and agreed to the proposition. The move was so blatantly naked to oust Master Tara Singh, that it evoked a strong protest from the Sikhs at large. Public opinion forced the Congress Ministry to change the intended provisions of the Bill to a more democratic and representative

electoral college for the election of 35 representatives of the erstwhile area of Pepsu in the Punjab. Hence it was decided that electoral college should comprise about 3000 Sikh voters, including Sikh legislators of Parliament and both Houses in the State from the Pepsu area, heads of the registered Sikh institutes, Sikh members of the Municipal Committees in Pepsu, Sikh Sarpanches of all Panchayats in Pepsu and the then 12 members of the interim Gurdwara Board of the Pepsu area. The bill in the amended form was passed into an Act in early January, 1959. The Shiromani Akali Dal under the leadership of Master Tara Singh, took it as a challenge and a direct interference in the administration of the Gurdwaras by the Government. Master Tara Singh had an interview with the Prime Minister on the 2nd January, 1959, who, however, refused to persuade otherwise, those who were responsible for it.

The amendment in the Gurdwara Act on these lines had a serious impact on the Sikh masses, and Master Tara Singh addressed a mammoth gathering of more than 25,000 persons at Chandigarh at the Second Punjabi Suba Conference, the first of its kind in the then capital of the Punjab, wherein he reiterated the demand for Punjabi Suba and said that he was contemplating holding a mass movement on a scale compared to which all previous agitations would pale into insignificance. He did not announce the mode and method of the agitation. It was said, that Gianī Kartar Singh should then enter the political arena to oppose the Punjabi Suba movement. Speaking at Jullundur on January 17, 1959, he said that the Punjabi Suba demand was neither practical politics, nor a live issue and that Master Tara Singh had taken it up in frustration. The situation, however, was very favourable for an agitational approach to the problem, as the Punjab Government had been put in the wrong by having brought amendment in the Gurdwara Act in a way, contrary to the interests of the Gurdwara administration, which was considered to be direct interference in the Gurdwara affairs. Master Tara Singh did not lose the opportunity, and announced that he would take out a silent procession of the Sikhs at Delhi to demonstrate

that the Sikhs wanted to register their protest against the interference of the Government in the Gurdwara administration and he fixed March 15, 1959 for the purpose.

The cumulative dissatisfaction among the Sikh masses with the non-implementation of the Regional Formula, the impact of Hindi Raksha movement on them, and the interference of the Government in the Gurdwara administration were the factors that contributed to the creation of an atmosphere favourable for agitation, and Master Tara Singh did not lose the opportunity. He announced that the silent procession on the 15th March would be purely religious, without any political slogans, to demonstrate and register the determination of the Sikhs to book no interference in the Gurdwara affairs. There could be no better issue before him to appeal to the Sikhs. He also announced that he would lead the procession. However, the Punjab Government was foolish enough to arrest him on March 14, 1959, when he was about to leave for Delhi. Orders were also issued cancelling all special trains which had been arranged for different jathas in the Punjab for conveying the participants to Delhi. Permits were also refused to the buses which had been hired for carrying the Sikhs to join the procession at Delhi. Several arrests were made in Ludhiana and other places in this regard. An adjournment motion moved by Akali M.L.As. in the Vidhan Sabha was disallowed, on which Akali M.L.As. led by Sarup Singh, walked out. The arrest of Master Tara Singh and other repressive measures taken by the Punjab Government, whipped up the enthusiasm of the Sikhs to participate in the silent religious demonstration for which thousands from all parts of India, arrived at Delhi and overnight a township sprang up on the banks of the Jamuna up to the Red Fort for their accommodation.

A silent procession was taken out, estimated to be between 50,000 to 3 lakhs by different reporters of newspapers, starting from the Parade Ground at 11 a.m. No one was chosen to head the procession. The portrait of Master Tara Singh was taken in a truck at the head. It was well behaved, walking slowly, in the formation of five, men wearing blue turbans and women wearing blue dopattas, chanting on the way, "Dhan Guru

Nanak", covering several miles route, through Chandni Chowk, Ajmeri Gate, Minto Bridge, Cannought Circus and Parliament Street, terminating at Raqub Ganj Gurdwara at 5 p.m. Scores of Embassy cars from different Foreign Embassies were seen at different points along the route of the procession watching the mammoth demonstration by the Sikhs. A huge All India Dharmic Conference was held in the lawns of Raqub Ganj Gurdwara, where a resolution was passed expressing great resentment at the arrest of Master Tara Singh, and declaring it 'wholly unwarranted'.

Master Tara Singh was released on the 21st March, 1959, presumably on the intervention of the Centre, and he then got the reply of the Prime Minister rejecting the offer for arbitration on the issue of interference in the Gurdwara administration. Master Tara Singh, in a statement at a press conference on the 22nd March, 1959 said that the one positive method of avoiding interference in the Gurdwara affairs was to stop the use of the membership of S.G.P.C. as a ladder for political ambition, and the best way was to prevent the members of the legislature from contesting the Gurdwara elections. A signed article by him also appeared in the Urdu daily the "Parbhat" making a similar suggestion. This was a very important announcement, coming from the President of the Shiromani Akali Dal and ex-President of the S.G.P.C. suggesting a way by which the activities of the S.G.P.C. could be switched to a purely religious sphere. I also took up this matter and wrote to the Prime Minister requesting him to intervene in the matter by sounding Chief Minister Kairon to have legislation along these lines. I also met Chief Minister Kairon, who agreed with me and asked me to draft a tentative bill incorporating the amendment disqualifying the members of the Legislature from contesting elections to the S.G.P.C. I drafted it and had it sent to the Chief Minister. He had the draft vetted by the Legal Rememberancer, but the matter was dropped as Giani Kartar Singh was opposed to imposing such disqualifications.

The Akali Dal Working Committee in its meeting on the 27th March, 1959, considered the Prime Minister's refusal of the arbitration proposal, reiterated their own stand by suggest-

ing the names of Jai Parkash Narain, Rajagopalachari and Acharya Vinobhe, but the Prime Minister again evaded the issue and wrote to Master Tara Singh to meet Acharya Vinobhe during his tour of the Punjab. The proposal for arbitration was rejected by the Prime Minister again on the 5th April, 1959, on the ground that there was nothing to be referred to arbitration, except the bona-fides or the mala-fides of the individuals of the Punjab Government, responsible for the legislation. Master Tara Singh announced that he would go on a fast unto death from the 16th April, 1959. It was then that a few well-meaning friends interceded. Then Nehru invited Master Tara Singh at tea on April 11, 1959, for talks, when both agreed to the appointment of a four-man committee, comprising two nominees of the Punjab Government and two of Master Tara Singh, to consider all allegations of interference in the religious affairs of the Sikhs, and suggest remedial action wherever possible. It was also decided that in case of disagreement between the members of the Committee, the matter would be referred to the Governor of the Punjab. It was further stipulated that "Jawahar Lal Nehru would be glad to help" if any difficulty arose regarding the interpretation of the agreement. No doubt, the Four Man Committee could not function and was not in a position to give a decision, yet it was a victory for Master Tara Singh, as he had been able to secure a probe in the conduct of the Congress Ministers.

This small concession created an apprehension in the minds of the communal section of the Hindus, and elucidation was sought about the attitude of the Central Government to the Punjabi Suba issue, when Pandit Nehru declared categorically in reply, "that there would be no Punjabi Suba." Master Tara Singh having secured a victory by getting a probe in the Congress Ministry's conduct, was out to declare his determination to obtain the Punjabi Suba. Therefore, he announced on May 7, 1959, at Ludhiana that he would fight the S.G.P.C.'s elections in January, 1960, on the Punjabi Suba issue thereby demonstrating the will of the Sikhs to secure their objective. The Akali Dal started a regular propoganda thereafter, throughout the length and breadth of the State preparing the Sikhs for

the coming elections. The preparations on the part of Master Tara Singh were taken as a challenge by the Congress Sikhs, and Giani Kartar Singh therefore, on the inspiration and support of Chief Minister Kairon sponsored a 'Sadh Sangat Board' a sort of a common front of the three ministerial groups, Chief Minister Kairon, Minister Rarewala's and Minister Giani Kartar Singh's who all started utilising the entire Government machinery for the objective of winning the S.G.P.C.'s elections. Public opinion, however, compelled Giani Kartar Singh to resign his Ministership on 24th October, 1959, declaring that he was going to devote his entire time and energy to defeating Master Tara Singh.

The decision of the Congress High Command on December 23, 1959, to bifurcate the State of Bombay into two States Maharashtra and Gujarat had a very healthy impact on the Sikh masses on the eve of the elections of the S.G.P.C. They felt sore that the Punjab was the only State being left bilingual. The 12th All India Akali Conference held at Patiala at the end of December under the Presidentship of Master Tara Singh, swayed the minds of the Sikh masses on the Punjabi Suba issue, and it was a foregone conclusion that the elections would be won by the Shiromani Akali Dal, despite the ministerial opposition in the name of 'Sadh Sangat Board'.

Amritsar, which had been the storm centre of Akali politics, when the Shiromani Akali Dal was first formed to launch an agitation in support of the non-cooperation movement during the Gurdwara Reform struggle, was again buzzing with extreme activity in January, 1950, when three parties, the Shiromani Akali Dal, Sadh Sangat Board, and the Pro-Communist Desh Bhagat Party, which had an electoral alliance with the Sadh Sangat Board, were preparing for final show-down. It was suprising that the communists should have aligned themselves with the Congress ministerial groups in opposition to Shiromani Akali Dal in the S.G.P.C. elections when the issue was the Punjabi Suba. The Sadh Sangat Board put in their biggest guns in the field to oppose Master Tara Singh, and the Akali Dal. Hukam Singh, the then Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, was spear-heading the opposition to the Akali Dal,

and toured the State in favour of the Sadh Sangat Board candidates. Giani Kartar Singh and other Ministers also held different meetings in their support. Gurnam Singh and I toured the different districts in favour of the Akali candidates. The virulence and intensity of the campaign of the Akali Dal was such, that the results were a foregone conclusion. Therefore, "The Tribune" writing its leaderette on January, 16, 1960, tried to belittle the importance of the S.G.P.C. elections, "The issue of Gurdwara Elections is a purely religious issue. Issues that are being canvassed and discussed are political and personal in all respects, and they are all confusing. The religious side has been totally ignored. In fact, the personal factors predominate all along. This is most unfortunate from the point of view of the Gurdwaras for whose proper management the S.G.P.C. is responsible. If only political and personal considerations are to influence the running of the religious places, the result will not be happy. In the circumstances, whichever party comes out victorious in the election, it cannot be considered a verdict on all political issues." How different from what was stated at the time when Master Tara Singh was defeated in the election for the Presidency of the S.G.P.C. on November 16, 1958, only 15 months earlier, when "The Tribune" and the Punjab Hindu press unanimously stated that his defeat was the defeat of the 'Punjabi Suba'.

The election results were declared on the 19th January, 1960, when the Shiromani Akali Dal secured 132 seats out of 139. The Sadh Sangat Board secured 4 seats only, while the pro-Communist Desh Bhagat Board failed to get even one. Master Tara Singh speaking on January 24, 1960, called upon the Congress High Command, and the Government of India to see the writing on the wall and the Sikh verdict on the 'Punjabi Suba' issue, and concede the demand for Punjabi Suba, failing which, he announced, "that initially the agitation would be confined only to the constitutional means to avoid any clash".

Headed by Master Tara Singh, on January 24, 1960, 132 members of the S.G.P.C. elected on the Akali Dal ticket took the pledge at Akal Takhat, the highest seat of Sikh religious

authority, to sacrifice their bodies, souls and properties (Tan, Man, Dhan) at the behest of the Shiromani Akali Dal for the achievement of Punjabi Suba. Master Tara Singh was first to take the pledge, others followed. The bugle had been blown. The beginning of the battle, however, was left to Government's choosing. It had been the technique of Master Tara Singh, during his political leadership, to prepare the ground for agitation, enthuse the Sikh people for the fight on the slogan of Panth in danger, and then wait for the Government to take a wrong step, and use it as a lever for agitation. He never missed an opportunity for a possible compromise, but carried the fight to its logical end, if the conditions and circumstances permitted. He had won an unprecedented victory in the S.G.P.C. elections which projected him before the world as the undisputed leader of the Sikhs. Despite his victory, it was reported in the press, that he made some proposals, which could serve as an alternative to the Punjabi Suba demand, and which would satisfy the Sikhs. He conveyed these proposals to Acharya Vinobhe but did not get a satisfactory response.

He was unanimously elected President of the S.G.P.C. at a General Meeting specially convened for the purpose on March 7, 1960, where it was also decided to boycott the 26-member Committee appointed by the State Government to consider the language issue. The following resolution was passed, proposed by Harnam Singh, a retired Judge of the High Court, and seconded by Gurnam Singh, another retired Judge of the High Court, later the Chief Minister of the Punjab, who had just entered active politics :

"This meeting has given anxious consideration to the formation of the 26-member Language Committee to consider the ways and means to solve the linguistic disputes ; but after consideration of the whole matter, the committee records :

"(a) That the Committee is being organised to unsettle the the Formula settled several years ago ;

(b) The Committee has been formed in utter contravention of the statutory provision formulated in November, 1956 ;

(c) That the recommendations of the Good Relations -Committee (two man committee) had already been rejected by

the Shiromani Akali Dal, the S.G.P.C. and the Chief Khalsa Dewan.

"This being the position, no useful purpose will be served by *considering and reconsidering* the report that has already been rejected by the Sikhs. The only solution of the linguistic trouble of the Punjab is to bifurcate the Punjab on the basis of Punjabi and Hindi.

"In these circumstances, the S.G.P.C. does not feel justified in participating in the Language Committee set up by the Punjab Government."

This was followed by the Shiromani Akali Dal calling a meeting of the Working Committee at Anandpur Sahib on the occasion of the Hola festival, when a momentous decision was taken, the second of its kind during the last 10 years, when it directed its nominees and other persons who had joined the Congress party in or after 1956, to forthwith resign from the Congress party and all its committees. The resolution was as follows :

"The Congress Government has gone back upon its promise and undertaking given to the Akali Dal in 1956, and has done its worst to interfere with the administration of the Sikh religious places ; and the Sikhs feel, that it has thus smothered Regional Formula ; and now the Government has unilaterally appointed a 26-member Committee with a view to kill the Punjabi language and script, and to unsettle the already settled language question and to create Hindu-Sikh tension. It has also announced that the Congress Government will, as long as it will continue, not permit the carving out of the Punjabi Speaking State ; and thus has thrown a direct challenge to the Sikh Panth. Therefore, the Akali Dal is left with no alternative but to accept the challenge and cut off all its connections with the Congress Committee."

The Shiromani Akali Dal, therefore, directed the legislators and members of the Parliament who had been elected on the Congress ticket but were the nominees of the Akali Dal to resign forthwith, in obedience to the mandate of the Akali Dal.

I was most distressed and disturbed at this development, as

I was also one of those who had been elected on Congress ticket to the Lok Sabha as the nominee of Shiromani Akali Dal. Sarup Singh was also one of those and was a member of the Punjab Vidhan Sabha. He had been the founder President of All India Sikh Students Federation and he and I used to have discussions on the future shape of the Punjabi Suba. We had been mainly responsible for the Akali Dal resolution of 1956, when I was the Senior Vice-President, rejecting the percentage concept in the Punjabi Suba, when a demand had been made, that the boundaries of the Punjabi Suba should extend to and include Karnal district minus Panipat Tehsil and also include Fatehabad Sub-Tehsil, and Sirsa Tehsil of the Hissar district. The opposition and antagonistic attitude of the Prime Minister to the bifurcation of the Punjab made us consider the proposition and strategy, that the demand should be made for the creation of the entire Punjab as a unilingual Punjab State with Punjabi as State language and Hindi as the language at the district level in areas where more than 70% of the population was Hindi-speaking. We felt that by switching to such a demand, and creating a lobby in its favour, we would be removing the communal tinge of percentage concept, the main target of attack by the fanatic section of the Hindus and thus, at the same time, extend the tradition and culture of the Sikhs to a larger area, which the acceptance of Punjabi in Gurmukhi script as a State language would entail. We also felt that by making such a demand, the resistance would shift to the communal-minded Hindus in Haryana, who would oppose imposition of Punjabi on the entire Punjab, which would have to take the onus of the fight against the extension of the unilingual Punjab State. This move would have the support of the Prime Minister, who was not, as such, opposed to the Punjabi language in Gurmukhi script. I had seen the Prime Minister in September and October, 1959, and found him very receptive to this solution. He stated at the same time that such an initiative and move should come from the Akali Dal which claimed to speak for the Sikhs. I had also maintained contact with Master Tara Singh. Therefore, it pained me when directions for withdrawal from the Congress were passed at Anandpur in

March, 1960, without even calling upon me to explain, as had been done in 1951, when the Akali nominees had been given an opportunity to explain why a withdrawal resolution should not be passed. I consulted several friends, many amongst them, in Akali Dal, who advised me to stay on, in the Congress, as *this might enable me to work on these lines*. I succeeded to a large extent when the Prime Minister, in a message to the Panches on the 23rd December, 1959, and in his speech at Delhi on the 31st December, 1959, said that the dominant language of the entire Punjab was Punjabi, though Hindi was spoken in some parts.

Five Akali M.L.As. out of 24 resigned from the Congress in pursuance of the resolution. They were, Sarup Singh, Atma Singh, Hargurnad Singh, Udham Singh and Master Partap Singh. The situation was taking a serious turn and the movement was gathering momentum, when Master Tara Singh resigned the Presidentship of the S.G.P.C. on April 30, 1960, announcing that he would devote his entire time to the agitation and movement for the creation of Punjabi Suba.

This movement also gained a further filip from the treatment that was being accorded to the Sikh settlers in other parts of India, particularly Uttar Pradesh. About 20,000 Sikh families had settled down in Terai area in Nainital district, after migration due to partition, and developed a vast wild tract, extending from Moradabad to Sitapur, comprising the jungle area which had been allotted to them after they had gone on the invitation of the U.P. Government to develop it. The Government had allotted these areas to political sufferers, ex-soldiers and even refugees from West Pakistan with a view to developing them. These migrants had put in hard labour and borne untold sufferings in clearing the jungles and converting the area into smiling and fertile farms. A new township of Rudhrapur had sprung up, and plots of land were sold to these settlers. No sooner had the area been fully developed, than the U.P. Government started ousting the settlers through various devices. It acquired 20,000 acres for dams, and another 10,000 acres for building open jails. It also passed the Land Eviction and Damages Recovery Act, which especially hit the Sikh settlers hard. This

strengthened the Punjabi Suba movement in Punjab, when it became known, that discriminatory treatment was being meted out to the Sikhs outside the Punjab.

Another factor which also strengthened the determination of the Sikhs was the opposition, spearheaded by the Arya Samajists and other fanatic sections of the Hindus, who were forging a united opposition to the Punjabi Suba. The Executive Committee of the Sanatan Dharam Parcharik Sabha invited about 100 prominent Hindus, including M.L.As., educationists and other public men at a meeting at Katha Bhawan in Amritsar District in March, 1960, in which a mandate was given to the two representatives serving on the twenty-six-member Language Committee never to accept the one language formula for the Punjab, and they were also directed not to agree to any solution which might directly or indirectly help the bifurcation of the State.

These moves led Master Tara Singh to take up the challenge. Speaking at Amritsar on May 10, 1960, at Manji Sahib, Master Tara Singh declared, "We are determined to obtain Punjabi Suba. We shall either win or die. We shall not be defeated." He called a conference of the Akali Jathedars in order to chalk out the programme regarding agitation. Chief Minister Kairon was also not inactive and was making a counter move through the Sikh Congress legislators, who condemned the Punjabi Suba movement. Three Congress legislators, Ajmer Singh, the then Chairman of the Punjab Regional Committee and later Minister in Kairon cabinet, Ram Dial Singh and Bhag Singh both M.L.As., in a joint statement at a press conference said, on May 16, 1960, that "In the present time, the atmosphere is not such as to be conducive to the solution of the Punjabi tangle and establishment of a State on linguistic basis." Ram Dial Singh added that once the Regional Formula had been accepted by Master Tara Singh, the demand for Punjabi Suba was baseless. Other Congress Sikh leaders also made similar statements.

Master Tara Singh called a Punjabi Suba convention for May 22, 1960, which was attended by a large number of people, including many Hindus and Muslims, members of the Swatantra

Party and P.S.P. and S.S.P. workers and leaders. Pandit Sunder Lal presided over the deliberations of the conference, and Dr. Saifud-din Kitchlu of martial law fame, once a very prominent leader of the Congress, inaugurated the convention by a speech in support of the Punjabi Suba. The main resolution was moved by Gurnam Singh, which was supported by others calling on the country and the Government of India "not to delay any more the inevitable formation of the State, when all other linguistic states have already been carved on a linguistic basis". The convention was also addressed by Shri K.G. Jodh, General Secretary of all India Linguistic States Conference who, along with other Muslim participants in the convention made forceful speeches in support of the Punjabi Suba demand. The participation of Muslim leaders from Delhi including Dr. Saif-ud-din Kitchlu gave an opportunity to Darbara Singh, the President of Pradesh Congress Committee, to make a most irresponsible statement attributing conspiracy of Master Tara Singh with Pakistan to create a tense situation in the Punjab. This statement was presumably inspired by some leaders from the Centre.

Master Tara Singh in consultation with the Working Committee announced his march from Amritsar on May 29, 1960, on his way to Delhi, where he said that he would take out a procession on 12th June, 1960, this time a political one, in contrast to the religious procession earlier, to demonstrate the Sikh support to the Punjabi Suba demand. He also declared that he would visit all the important Gurdwaras on the way, to rouse Sikh Public opinion in support of the struggle. Chief Minister Kairon quickly seized the opportunity to divert the attention of the people from internal dissension in the Congress party to the tense situation to be created outside. He got Master Tara Singh and many other Akali leaders including 5 Akali M.L.As. arrested on May 24, 1960.

For some time there had been arising dissatisfaction amongst the senior members of the Congress Assembly party against Kairon's dictatorial attitude and lack of courtesy, and influential dissident groups had been formed, which had collected the necessary material. They framed charges of corrup-

tion, nepotism and favouritism against Chief Minister Kairon, which they submitted in the form of a memorandum to the Congress High Command and to the Prime Minister. The judgment in the Karnal murder case, in which the Punjab High Court had upheld the findings of acquittal of D.S. Grewal, a Superintendent of Police, had been announced, in which strictures had been passed against the Chief Minister Kairon and his friends, responsible for the concoction of the case. This gave further support to the dissident group in its charges against the Chief Minister. It was in this situation of the Congress Assembly party, that Master Tara Singh had announced his programme regarding agitation. The fact that Chief Minister Kairon was out to explore the situation to create a turmoil in the State, was borne out by certain questions asked of the Prime Minister during a press conference, when it was hinted by the correspondents that Chief Minister Kairon had precipitated the crisis by arresting Master Tara Singh on the 24th May, 1960, and also 200 Akali leaders and workers, including 5 Sikh M.L.As. and all the prominent members of the S.G.P.C. The Prime Minister, of course, denied this, gave full support to Chief Minister Kairon, and even considered the High Court strictures to be "sledge hammer to kill a fly" when the matter was "trivial" as compared to the Akali agitation which Chief Minister Kairon was out to suppress.

The Akali newspapers the "Parbhat" and the "Akali" were suppressed and their publication stopped, and all the members of their staff were arrested and handcuffed and marched to the police station on the complaint of a police stooge. This blatant injustice and naked abuse of the process of law created a stir amongst the journalists of the Punjab, and the All India Journalist Association protested, which forced the Punjab Government to withdraw the cases against the staff of the Akali papers. The arrest of Master Tara Singh, however, under Preventive Detention Act and of other prominent leaders and workers of the Akali Dal under section 107/151, Criminal Procedure Code in which bail bonds of the amount of Rs. 50,000/- to Rs. 100,000/- were demanded by the Magistracy, stirred public opinion at the misuse of power by the police and

the Executive. A reign of terror was created throughout the State. In spite of all this, the Shiromani Akali Dal stuck to its programme of sending a jatha of 11 to Delhi, without Master Tara Singh, of course, on 20th May, 1960 as scheduled. The jatha was arrested 3 miles from Amritsar along with many of the sympathisers who were accompanying it to see it off. False cases were concocted by the Police against those who had accompanied the Jatha in sympathy. Such were the methods adopted by the Executive. This led to another movement, the second of its kind during the last 10 years, when every day eight jathas of 11 Akalis each would move out to Delhi and court arrest outside the precincts of Sri Darbar Sahib. By June 7, the total arrests made were 1705. The second battle for the Punjabi Suba had begun. This situation had been brought about by the Government, which had unnecessarily arrested Master Tara Singh and other Akali leaders. The Akali Dal had to keep up the peaceful march of Jathas to Delhi to demonstrate democratically the determination of the Sikhs to obtain Punjabi Suba by peaceful means.

References and Notes

1. "The Tribune" 15th February, 1957
2. Ibid., 31st March, 1957
3. Ibid., 7th June, 1957
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 8th June, 1957
6. Ibid., 2nd July, 1957
7. Ibid., 28th December, 1957
8. Ibid., 31st December, 1957
9. Ibid., 15th June, 1958
10. Ibid., 23rd March, 1959

PUNJABI SUBA IN THE OFFING

X

The Akali Dal became embroiled in a struggle not of its own choosing. With the start of the struggle the passages to the Golden Temple were practically blocked, as the police would harass the Sikhs going there from the bus stand, the Railway Station and other places, in order to stop the 'satyagraha' by the Jathas, even the Sikhs coming from the city were interrogated and humiliated, and some who stated that they were going to Sri Darbar Sahib to pay homage or have a dip in the holy tank, were arrested under section 107/151, Criminal Procedure Code. This could not be taken lying down. The movement started from the precincts of Sri Darbar Sahib, which became the headquarters from where the Jathas moved down. The repressive measures of the Government were such that the organisers had to choose Sri Darbar Sahib as the centre of the movement from which the volunteers came out and courted arrest. The leaders were at the Akal Takhat. Daily dewans were held at Sri Manji Sahib within the precincts of Sri Darbar Sahib. The decision of the organisers to have Sri Darbar Sahib as a hide-out and Headquarters had become the subject of criticism even by well-meaning friends without appreciating the theo-political status of the Gurdwaras, particularly the Golden Temple in the religion, history and traditions of the Sikhs. It was the Sixth Guru, Guru Har Gobind, who had built the Akal Takhat edifice opposite the entrance bridge of the Golden Temple, where he donned two

swords representing the spiritual and material aspects of human duty, thus projecting before the world that Bhagti, i.e., religion, morality and truth, and Shakti, i.e., power, to protect them, go together. Wearing these two swords, he sat in state, symbolising the two aspects of life, as a guidance to posterity. Therefore, the Akal Takhat, according to Sikh teachings is the fountain-head from where Sikh traditions, Sikh culture and the Sikh way of life is to flow to the world at large. With the collapse of the political power of the Sikhs after the martyrdom of Banda Singh Bahadur, the Golden Temple became the centre of people's devotions, political power and spiritual thinking, where the Sikhs gathered during all these 250 years despite all suffering and sacrifice, to take decisions, on their future. More than once, the Golden Temple and its adjuncts had been razed to the ground, and the area occupied by the foreign rulers, but the determination of the Sikhs, to attain freedom and sovereignty remained. They always kept and maintained the Golden Temple and the building attached thereto as the centre of their activities, political, social, cultural and religious, not as a matter of concession from or sufferance of any power, but as an inherent right of the Panth—a politico-religious society to represent the Sikhs. This right has never been subject to any compromise or deviation. This status and position of the Golden Temple is unprecedented in the religious and political history of the other peoples of the world. The Golden Temple for the Sikhs is not only a religious centre, but it represents an institution where they have a right to gather, deliberate and decide their future. They have fought for this right for the last four centuries, and they have maintained this right, come what may. It was in assertion of this right, that the Golden Temple became the centre of activities for the movement in support of an objective on which the Sikhs were united, and against which forces alien to them were arrayed.

It was unfortunate, therefore, that this unique status of the Golden Temple founded on the history and the doctrine of the Sikhs, was not appreciated even by those who were otherwise sympathetically inclined towards their struggle. The Swatantra

Party had appointed a committee consisting of K. M. Munshi, N. C. Chatterjee, Kartar Singh Cambelpuri on July 31, 1960, to study the situation following the Punjabi Suba Movement from May 22, 1960. The Committee visited Amritsar, toured the Punjab and came to the finding in its report that the measures taken by the Punjab Government were excessive, indiscriminate and harsh with a view to striking terror in the people, but the Committee also remarked that it appreciated the difficulties of the Punjab Government in an embarrassing situation when the Gurdwaras were being used as the centre of political activities. These remarks of the Committee showed their ignorance of the position and status of the Golden Temple.

The movement gained momentum, as the time lapsed. Every day jathas would come out of the precincts of the Darbar Sahib, peacefully and calmly, and court arrest, and it was claimed that by July 25, 1960, 17,821 Akalis had been arrested at Amritsar alone. The routine courting of arrest at Amritsar was 21 daily, whereas it was 11 at Delhi, but more persons courted arrest when there was insistence by those gathered there.

The movement started at Delhi because of the foolhardiness of the Government, which banned the procession of the 12th June earlier announced and scheduled by the Akali Dal. Rachhpal Singh, President of the Shiromani Akali Dal at Delhi, had appealed to the Government, expressing the hope, "that the Government will not come in the way of our legitimate right to take out the procession. If it does, we will be compelled to defy it." But the Delhi authorities banned the procession on the 9th June, blocked the route and approaches to Delhi, so that the Sikhs might not come in from outside. 306 Sikhs were taken into detention at the border of Delhi. Therefore, the Delhi Akali Dal directed jathas of four to go out from Sis Ganj Gurdwara in a non-violent fashion and proceed towards the Town Hall. Earlier, a purely religious congregation was held at the Gandhi Ground, opposite the place where Kirtan was going on, when a dozen policemen under the command of the Deputy Superintendent of Police

entered the pandal and seized the loudspeaker. As a result of this the programme was abandoned. Even though the Sikhs were peaceful, the Delhi police blocked all the roads towards the Sis Ganj Gurdwara from 9 a.m. on the 12th June, and harassed the Sikhs in many ways. In spite of this, the people gathered in thousands inside the Gurdwara. The first batch of 11, in jathas of 4 each, led by Harbans Singh, came out at 4 p.m. on the 12th June, having pledged themselves to non-violence. They had been directed to recite only 'Sat Nam Sri Waheguru' and when this batch, in formation of 4, reached the clock tower, the police rained lathi blows on them, and also charged with lathis the people who had collected in front of the Town Hall and of Gurdwara Sis Ganj. A large number of men, women and children were injured, either by lathis or during the stampede. The police threw a volley of tear gas bombs, and the entire atmosphere was charged with smoke. This went on for a long time. The Sikhs were hounded out everywhere, even from cafes, restaurants and shops, but they remained peaceful. The police continued their lathi charge till 7 p.m. Delhi had never seen in its living memory such repression of a peaceful procession of the nature. Nearly 2000 Sikhs were arrested on that day, and many were seriously injured. The President of the Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee of Delhi State waited in a deputation, along with other members, on the Prime Minister on the 20th June, demanding a judicial probe into excesses committed by the police, but there was no response. The Akali Dal, thereafter, started sending 11 volunteers a day to court arrest, and by the 25th July the total arrests there were 2390.

The momentum of the movement evoked opposition from the Arya Samaj section, who apprehended that the Government might not enter into negotiations with the Sikhs again. A deputation comprising Virendra, a prominent Congressite and Arya Samajist, Narain Dass and Harkishan Dass, General Secretary and Vice-President of Sanatan Dharam Pratinidhi Sabha respectively, Acharya Ram Dev, President of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Inder Singh, Vice-President of Arya Pradesh Sabha, Rup Lal Batra, a member of Delhi Corporation and

Jagat Narain then an M.L.A., waited on the Prime Minister on June 16, 1960, and assured him that the Hindus would give full cooperation in the maintenance of law and order, conveying thereby, in the suppression of the Sikhs; and that the Punjabi Suba demand was actually a step to the Sikh independent State, and must be resisted. The movement, however, gained strength as a result of these repressive measures, but it also gave an opportunity to many of the Sikh politicians, currying favour with the Congress High Command to give statements condemning the movement. Nine prominent Sikh leaders including Iqbal Singh, later Deputy Minister, and Ishar Singh Majhel, issued a pamphlet criticising the Akali agitation. Giani Kartar Singh also called the Punjabi Suba movement as undemocratic in his speech at Amritsar on August 4, 1960. Forty-six Sikhs leaders of Delhi amongst whom prominent were Jathedar Santokh Singh, Ajit Singh, M.P. of Bhatinda, Gopal Singh Dardi, later an M.P., and others condemned the move of the Akali Dal to observe 15th August, 1960, as the day of 'Barbadi' (ruin) instead of Azadi (freedom).

The Prime Minister, speaking on the Independence day, August 15, 1960, at Delhi called the movement "a stage temasha going on in Delhi and Punjab about the Punjabi Suba," and declared, "that this demand might be good or bad, but there were many wrong things in the movement, and there is danger to the freedom of the country. The Punjabi language is a great language, a virile language and I want that every Punjabi should himself consider to learn both Hindi and Punjabi" but there could be no bifurcation of the Punjab. Chief Minister Kairon, also speaking on the same occasion at Chandigarh, declared that Punjab would maintain its bilingual character, and announced that he would start releasing from jails the people who would disassociate themselves from the agitation. The total arrests by that time had reached the figure of 25,000 in the Punjab alone.

A convention of the Congress Sikhs was called at Rohtak on August 28, 1960 which was presided over by the Chief Minister Kairon, where he, in his presidential address said,

D.I.G. on October 9, when three were killed at the spot, and one died later. They were also lathi charged. Another incident occurred at Patiala. A procession came out from the side of Gurdwara Dukhniwaran, proceeded to the Railway crossing and had reached the bridge in the factory area, when a cordon was put round the processionists, and firing was resorted to, on the allegation that there had been brick batting. Two persons were killed on the spot, and some were injured. The situation was becoming very explosive throughout the State because of the repressive measures which were being adopted by Chief Minister Kairon. It was in these circumstances, that Ashok Mehta, Chairman of the Praja Socialist Party, gave a warning to the Central Government in a statement on October 30, that the situation would deteriorate, if efforts were not made to find out a peaceful solution of the Akali demand for Punjabi Suba. Sant Fateh Singh, the then dictator, however, had begun to appreciate the technique of the opposition, and in his speeches and statements referred to the secular aspect of the demand, laying more emphasis on the aspect, that he would not mind however large the Punjabi Suba was made, provided it was based on linguistic considerations and Punjabi in Gurmukhi script was made the State language. Speaking to the press on October 28, 1960, from Sri Darbar Sahib he said, "We do not seek Sikh majority area. We are not bothered by percentages. We want the Punjabi Suba to comprise an area, where the Punjabi language is spoken regardless of the fact whether the Sikhs are in majority or in minority."¹ Again, in a statement to the press on the 1st November, 1960, he asserted, "There is no question of calling off the agitation according to my point of view. It has become necessary to lay down my life to vindicate our points and to save the country from the dictatorial rule in the garb of democracy." He condemned the unprecedented repression which had been let loose by the Government, and the reign of terror launched by the Government agents and declared, "It is entirely in the hands of the Government to end this agitation by accepting the legitimate demand for the Punjabi-speaking State and on a purely linguistic basis."

It was during this agitation, that M. S. Golwalkar, R.S.S. Chief, visited the Punjab and studied the conditions himself. He criticised those who preached that Punjabi was not the mother tongue of the Hindus. He advised them to accept Punjabi as their mother tongue and thus try to create an atmosphere congenial to the maintenance of unity in the Punjab. Referring to the script issue, he said that only those who own Punjabi as their mother tongue had the right to determine its script, and said that, unless the Hindus remove the misgivings of the Sikhs, creation of the Punjabi Suba would be inevitable. Therefore he advised that the entire Punjab be declared a Punjabi speaking State, with certain safeguards for those whose dialect was different from Punjabi. He added, "If however, the linguistic States were to be created as had been created in other parts of the country, there was no justification for denying the Punjabi Suba to the Punjabi speaking people."¹² This was the first statement from a Hindu leader of the eminence and status of Guru Golwalkar, but the statement created a commotion in the Hindu circles, and they forced the R.S.S. Chief later to dilute his advice.

Conditions in the Punjab, however, were reaching a climax as a result of the seven months' struggle, in which more than 40,000 Sikhs had been sent to jail under the most painful and humiliating conditions, scores of Satyagrahis had been shot dead, and hundreds had been injured, but there was no slackening in the struggle. Sant Fateh Singh, on whom the mantle of leadership had fallen due to the detention of Master Tara Singh in jail, never faltered and guided the movement shrewdly and efficiently. The stone-hearted administration of Chief Minister Kairon was very callous to the suffering of the Sikhs. It was in such conditions that Sant Fateh Singh wrote a pathetic letter on October 29, 1960, to the Prime Minister. He recapitulated the important events of the previous seven months of struggle, drawing the Prime Minister's attention to the malicious charges brought by Congress leaders like Darbara Singh, who had attributed to Master Tara Singh a conspiracy with Pakistan authorities by which "10,000 Akalis would be given Guerilla training, and that after the conspiracy

Master Tara Singh had started the Punjabi Suba movement," and to the arrest of several thousands of Sikhs on faked charges, and security proceedings demanding heavy bonds, to the suppression of the entire Sikh press on false pleas, and to the reign of terror that had been calculatedly resorted to by the authorities at Delhi on June 12, 1960, and to other tyrannical measures. But the greatest wrong to the Sikhs according to Sant Fateh Singh's complaint in his letter, was that the Prime Minister should have pronounced that there could be no Punjabi Suba in India, when it was contrary to all democratic principles. He warned the Prime Minister that he could not bear about the sufferings of his people, and would be forced to go on fast unto death on a date which he would fix after hearing from the Prime Minister, and his reaction to the charges he had enumerated. Sant Fateh Singh had, however, no response to his letter, and accordingly he wrote again announcing therein that he would start his fast from December 18, 1960, concluding his second historic letter in the following words :

"In view of the happenings, and because of the great lawlessness committed by the Government in opposing the constitutional and peaceful Punjabi Suba movement, I feel that the time has come, when my country has failed in a democratic and constitutional way, and that it should be saved from being shaken; and that dictatorial methods of governing the country should be stemmed by self-immolation. The dictate of my conscience is, that, following the methods of the great Guru, I should lay down my life for this noble cause. I have, therefore, decided to fast unto death to move the Prime Minister and the Government of India to reason, and accede to the principle of constitutional and legitimate demand of creating a unilingual Punjabi Suba purely on a linguistic basis like all other linguistic States, and give up brutal methods of opposing the constitutional and peaceful movement as has been resorted to by the Government in the present case."

The announcement of Sant Fateh Singh made Jai Prakash Narain go to Dharamsala to meet Master Tara Singh, whereafter he interviewed the Prime Minister on the 10th 11th 12th 13th 14th 15th 16th 17th 18th 19th 20th 21th 22th 23th 24th 25th 26th 27th 28th 29th 30th of the month.

and presumably made a certain proposal to solve the Punjab problem. The Prime Minister, however, ruled out categorically the possibility of any compromise or mediation between the Government and the Akalis, stating that Sant Fateh Singh could go on fast and further added, "I cannot be a party to any negotiations". Referring to the fast of Sant Fateh Singh he said, "He can go on fast."

Sant Fateh Singh started his fast exactly at 9.00 a.m. on December 18, 1960, in the presence of a huge crowd, which had gathered at Shri Manji Sahib. In the course of a ten-minute speech, he directed the Sikhs to remain peaceful in face of great provocation, and recounted the happenings of the past seven months of the Punjabi Suba agitation, giving the reason that these sufferings had induced him to make this supreme sacrifice. He felt, he said, that his sacrifice would ultimately move the Government of India, and asked the Sikhs to remain loyal to the country, adding, "Every particle of the country is ours, and its loss is our loss." He directed the Sikhs also to adhere to four approved slogans only, namely 'Punjabi Suba Zindabad, Hindu Sikh Ekta Zindabad, Azad Bharat Zindabad, Jhulte Nishan Rahen Panth Maharaj De.' A seven-man committee was constituted with Harcharan Singh Hudhara as convener and Ajit Singh Balla, Satbir Singh, Pritam Singh Sarin, Bawa Gurdial Singh, Jivan Singh Umranangal and Jagir Singh as members, to run the agitation during his fast. It was also announced that 10 Akali leaders, Jivan Singh Umranangal, Pritam Singh Sarin, Sant Ram Singh, Sant Gurdial Singh, Sant Jai Singh, Jathedar Bhan Singh, Jathedar Darshan Singh, Sant Arjan Singh, Sant Amar Singh and Hukam Singh would fast unto death after Sant Fateh Singh.

The fast of Sant Fateh Singh made the Prime Minister repeat what he had said a less earlier and declare in a message to the new Panches that had gathered at Chandigarh on 20th December, 1960, that "Punjabi is the main language of the Punjab. It should be promoted in every way." He further said that "Many people also speak Hindi Hindi is the national language of the entire country. It should also progress. These two are given equal status. There is no conflict between the

two. Both are complementary to each other, but the Punjabi language particularly is the language of the Punjab." The emphasis of the Prime Minister, that the Punjabi language particularly is the language of the Punjab, was an indication of the working of his mind in regard to the solution. Sarup Singh, M.L.A. interviewed the Prime Minister, and it was on December 23 when the Prime Minister again, addressing a public meeting at Delhi, made a personal appeal to Sant Fateh Singh to give up his fast, and invited him for talks at Delhi. He said in his speech that many things had happened which had delayed giving Punjabi its due place, for which he was willing to take the blame. He added that, "There is no point in all these things, and it amounts to play with the nation and the country." He said in conclusion: "I would respectfully request Sant Fateh Singh to give up his fast." Sarup Singh returned to Amritsar and conveyed to the Akali Dal meeting held behind closed doors that the Prime Minister seemed to be ready to agree to the unilingual Punjab but the Akali Dal General Body declared the appeal to be 'unsatisfactory, self-contradictory and based on ignorance,' and passed the following resolution:

"The Shiromani Akali Dal has been carrying on the agitation about which the resolution was adopted at a convention on May 22 last. After that, the Government by its self-willed action, thrust the morcha on us and our 50,000 Sikhs had gone to jail. Many were martyred, others had to bear unbearable provocations. The Government refused to listen to arguments in favour of their just and true demand, and Sant Fateh Singh was compelled to undertake a fast unto death. Keeping in view the serious consequences, the Prime Minister Pandit Nehru has made a self-contradictory statement about the Punjab affairs. The meeting considered his statement unsatisfactory and expressed surprise at his ignorance about the Punjabi Suba, and strongly demands the acceptance of the Punjabi Suba to save the country from a dangerous situation."

Sant Fateh Singh, however, issued a conciliatory statement, which read, "I firmly grasp the hand of friendship and goodwill extended by Mr. Nehru. I am prepared to go and discuss

the matter arising out of the Punjabi Suba agitation if he paves the way for it." There were, however, forces that were acting against all moves of the Akali Dal, and the most formidable was the Chief Minister Kairon who inspired a spurt of statements from the Congress stooges and others, condemning the move of Sant Fateh Singh to fast unto death. A joint statement came in the press from Major Harinder Singh, M.L.A. later a Minister, Giani Partap Singh, Sohan Singh Jalalusman, Jai Inder Singh, Narain Singh Shabbazpuri, all M.L.As., that the fast was an anti-Sikh move. Twenty other Sikh members of the State Legislature namely Ajmer Singh, Umrao Singh, Rajinder Singh, Balwant Singh Chinarthai, Harcharan Singh Brar, Ram Dyal Singh, Jasdev Singh Sandhu, Gurmit Singh, Gurdit Singh, Bbag Singh, Pal Singh Romi, Giani Bakhtawar Singh and others in a joint statement deplored the fast unto death, and described it as a measure not only at variance with the practice of democracy, but also with tenets and basis of the Sikh faith. Baldev Singh, former Defence Minister who was on his sick-bed in those days, made a bitter attack on the Punjab Government, especially the Chief Minister, for the political situation created in the State due to the Akali movement. He attributed the situation to the failure of the Punjab Government to implement the Regional Formula as originally intended. This statement evoked a reply from Giani Kartar Singh and Gian Singh Rarewala, who called Baldev Singh's statement, "a sick statement from a sick man" and repudiated the charge of non-implementation of the Regional Formula. Prabodh Chander, a very prominent Congress M.L.A. retoting in a press statement, supported Baldev Singh's stand, stating that had the Regional Formula been honestly worked, the present bitterness of Punjabi Suba movement would have been avoided, and added, "regarding the statement of Gian Singh Rarewala and Giani Kartar Singh, all that I can say is that this is political dishonesty. Time without number, they had declared in the meetings of the Punjab Regional Committee, that the Punjab Government had hailed to honour the commitments made under the Regional Formula".⁴

Reports from knowledgeable quarters in the Prime Minister's

camp were indicative of the fact that the Prime Minister could be persuaded to declare the entire Punjab as unilingual, with Punjabi as State language, but he would not allow bifurcation of the State. A certain section in the Akali circles inside the Golden Temple controlling the movement had become agreeable to the acceptance of this proposition at the instance of two gentlemen who had stood by Sant Fateh Singh through thick and thin during the movement. They were Sarup Singh and Professor Satbir Singh, who had played a major role in this regard. Sarup Singh had all this while favoured the whole of the Punjab as unilingual. Satbir Singh was a forceful speaker, who used to speak to the masses in the evening gatherings at Sri Manji Sahib, and bring them to such an emotional pitch that the Akali leadership never ran short of volunteers or funds. Another young man who had done tremendous work in the morcha activities on the publicity side was Bhan Singh, the then President of All India Sikh Students Federation. But the tragic irony of the situation was, that the Chief Minister Kairon used to have complete information of minute-to-minute activities of the Akali leadership from the informers in Sant Fateh Singh's camp, and it was astounding to know that very prominent Akalis in public life were in the pay of the police. No sooner had a certain decision been taken in the Akali camp, than a telephone message about it was conveyed to the Police Headquarters at Amritsar. Chief Minister Kairon was well aware of what Sarup Singh conveyed to the Working Committee on his return from Delhi after interviewing the Prime Minister. He was very much concerned that there should be no compromise with the Akali leadership and no solution of the tangle be found, so that the situation must remain tense. It was in these circumstances that Ashok Mehta in a statement to the press at Cuttack, said, "Mr. Kairon's administration is anything but democratic," and added, "It is one State where members of the Civil Services class do not feel safe and secure, and I am surprised and pained that the mantle of the Prime Minister's protection should be holding Sardar Kairon to cover up his misdeeds. His own colleagues in the cabinet are so frightened that they cannot function freely." He further

said that he was afraid that if Kairon succeeded in suppressing the Punjabi Suba agitation ; "It will mean that the brave province of Punjab has surrendered to the dictates of one man, and if there is collusion in the State in order to boost one man, it may drag the entire Northern India into the vortex of trouble."

Chief Minister Kairon also knew, that Master Tara Singh had in mind the concept of the Sikh percentage in the unilingual Punjab ; and that whereas all these years, the Shiromani Akali Dal had been laying emphasis on the carving out of the Punjabi-speaking areas purely on the linguistic basis, there Master Tara Singh had always welcomed a smaller Punjab with a majority of Sikhs as a Sikh 'homeland'. Even otherwise, the declaring of the whole of the Punjab as unilingual would have shifted the burden of agitation to the Arya Samajists, which Kairon did not desire as he always felt that he dared not suppress a Hindu movement, whereas he had no scruples to deal harshly with the Sikhs. Therefore, the only strategy he thought of was to release Master Tara Singh on January 4, 1961, before the Prime Minister's offer of December 31, 1960, could be made the basis of future talks, in order to suspend Sant Fateh Singh's fast. Chief Minister Kairon, on ordering the release of Master Tara Singh gave a statement to the press that this decision, "flows from and is because of the statement made by the Prime Minister requesting Sant Fateh Singh to give up the fast unto death." He added, "The Government believes that the release of Master Tara Singh will give the Akali Dal and Sant Fateh Singh an opportunity to consider this request." And it happened exactly as the Chief Minister had visualised. The section in the Akali camp that had come to agree to accept the whole of the Punjab as unilingual was silenced. Master Tara Singh on his release was given a tremendous welcome, and the Working Committee of the Dal in its meeting on January 5, 1961, passed the following resolution :

"The Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal has discussed the entire situation created by the Punjabi Suba movement and Sant Fateh Singh's fast, in its two-day meet-

ing under the Presidentship of Master Tara Singh. The statement of the Prime Minister dated 31st December, 1960, that he had sent his request to Sant Fateh Singh to come and convince him of the justness of the demand of Punjabi Suba before resorting to fast and also the telegram of the Prime Minister to Sant Fateh Singh from Bhavanagar, has also been dispassionately considered by the Working Committee. The Working Committee is of the view that though more effective methods to communicate the Prime Minister's request for opening talks on the question of Punjabi Suba should have been adopted to avoid later unhappy development, yet it is of the view, that the offer of negotiations and talks on the question of the unilingual Punjabi State made by the Prime Minister, should be considered in the hope that an honest effort will be made by the Government of India to understand and concede the demand made by the Shiromani Akali Dal on its merits. Before, however, some concrete steps can be taken in response to the gesture of the Prime Minister, the restoration of normal conditions, civil liberties, freedom of speech and movement in the Punjab and Delhi are necessary. Sant Fateh Singh's condition, however, is very serious and causing grave concern, not admitting of any delay. Hence the Working Committee considers that an urgent telegraphic reply be sent to the telegram of Prime Minister on the above mentioned lines and his reply be considered in the Working Committee meeting tomorrow at 10 A.M., when the entire situation will be considered in the light of the relevant circumstances."³

The Working Committee of the Akali Dal considered Nehru's reply the next day in its day-long meeting and various pros and cons were discussed and it was decided to leave the matter to Sant Fateh Singh, the fasting leader. Master Tara Singh, Satbir Singh, Jathedar Chet Singh and Giani Kirpal Singh went to Sant Fateh Singh and apprised him of the Prime Minister's letter and the decision of the Akali Dal, and sought his advice in the background of the pledge that he had taken. Sant Fateh Singh refused to accept the Prime Minister's letter as fulfilment of his pledge, stating, "As I have taken the pledge to break the fast only after the principle

is accepted, I cannot go back on my words." It would be relevant to mention here that the pledge as it had been taken was worded thus, "The Prime Minister and the Government of India should listen to the argument and accept the principle of the legitimate demand for the creation of the Punjab-speaking State. I will not break the fast unless the demand is conceded."⁶

Sant Fateh Singh's adamant stand again set the top Akali leaders thinking, and it was decided that Master Tara Singh should forthwith leave for Bhavanagar for personal talks with the Prime Minister, to find a solution. This decision presumably was taken on the persuasion of the two Congress emissaries, Ram Nath Seth and Harcharan Singh, who were both of the view that Master Tara Singh's going to Bhavanagar would accelerate settlement.

Dr Rajinder Kaur M.A. Ph.D., daughter of Master Tara Singh, gave another version in this connection much later. She wrote, in a signed article, that Master Tara Singh on his release was very much pressed by the friends of Sant Fateh Singh to manage termination of his fast at any cost, on which he decided to leave for Bhavanagar. But before his arrival there, "Sant (Sant Fateh Singh) had got a telegram, sent by Professor Satbir Singh to the Prime Minister, that Master Tara Singh had nothing new to demand, and all that he would want was reiteration of New Delhi statement of the Prime Minister wherein he had said that Punjabi was the language of the whole of the Punjab which clearly conveyed that he need not concede any other thing. Pandit Nehru told Master Tara Singh, that all others wanted the breaking of the fast, whereas you (Master Tara Singh) do not allow this. After a heated argument, father (Master Tara Singh) left a writing for the Prime Minister that such an announcement would meet the pledge of Sant Fateh Singh, which was made by the Prime Minister soon after, on which father rang up from Delhi directing a breaking of the fast"⁷.

This version is contrary to what was reported in the press then as discussed above, but it is worth putting it on record.

Accordingly, Master Tara Singh, accompanied by Harbans

Singh Gujral and Lachhman Singh Gill, went to Bhavanagar, and had a two-hour talk with the Prime Minister on January 7, 1961. The Prime Minister had earlier met Ram Nath and Harcharan Singh. Master Tara Singh was disappointed at the interview, and declared to the press that he would be reaching Amritsar. In the mean time, Sant Fateh Singh had told other Akali leaders, that he would not break his fast unless Master Tara Singh directed him to do so personally. Master Tara Singh left for Delhi on his way to Amritsar from Bhavanagar with his companions. It seemed that the Prime Minister had done some rethinking about the issue, and made a public declaration in a speech on the 8th night, wherein he referred to the interview with Master Tara Singh and the long talks they had and admitted that there was a basic difference in approach, but announced that "It is not out of any discrimination against Punjab or distrust of the Sikhs that the process of forming a linguistic state was not possible after applying it elsewhere" He further said that the question of discrimination did not arise, but that many matters had to be taken into consideration when applying this principle. One of these matters was certainly the language, but the language alone could not be the sole consideration. "I cannot accept the proposal that I should accept the principle of formation of a purely linguistic State, so far as the Punjab is concerned. I am convinced that in the case of the division of the Punjab, it will be very harmful to Punjab, to the Sikhs as well as the Hindus, and to the whole of India. One of the leading and progressing State would fall back and get entangled in new problems." Reading from a written script, he said further, "I have already stated in my Delhi speech on December 31, 1960, what our views are about the Punjabi Suba and the Punjabi language. Punjab state is, broadly speaking a Punjabi Suba with Punjabi as the dominant language. It is true that some persons of the Punjab speak Hindi, but essentially Punjabi is the dominant language, and should be encouraged in every way." He stressed his anxiety about Sant Fateh Singh's fast, and expressed his expectation that he would give it up, adding the following extempore to the written script, "Now I

add one word to this, because Master Tara Singh mentioned it to me about Sant Fateh Singh's having an oath and he should not be asked to break it. I do not like asking any person to break a solemn oath, but I am convinced that what I have said in my Delhi speech, and what I am stating today, and the facts that I have placed before the country with regard to the Punjabi language, clearly meet the substance of what Sant Fateh Singh has said. Oaths are not taken with regard to some legal aspect or statutory ways of looking at things, but about the substance of the things. And therefore, what I have stated should be quite enough for Sant Fateh Singh to meet this difficulty, and give up his fast."

Master Tara Singh was at Delhi at that time when he was apprised of the statement which in a way conceded the principle by accepting that the whole of the Punjab could be unilingual. The substance of the oath had thus been met by the declaration. It was then that Master Tara Singh sent a telegram to Sant Fateh Singh, "I am satisfied with today's speech of the Prime Minister at Sardar Nagar. Request to break your fast. It fulfils the requirements of vow." On return to Amritsar on January 8, 1961, he made the following statement, further clarifying his stand, "The purpose for which I went to Bhavanagar yesterday was to request the Prime Minister to declare :

(a) That it was not on account of any discrimination against or distrust of Punjab or the Sikhs that the linguistic principle was not being applied to Punjab, but for other reasons which can be discussed and considered by mutual discussions ; and

(b) That any other matter arising out of the Punjabi Suba would be discussed between the Government and the Akali Dal.

These are substantially met by the speech by the Prime Minister at Sardar Nagar this evening. I welcome the same here, and advise Sant Fateh Singh that his vow has been fulfilled and request him to break his fast immediately." Sant Fateh Singh was also commanded by the five Piaras, Giani Chet Singh, Giani Kirpal Singh, Giani Fauja Singh, S. Bakh-

shish Singh and S. Mohan Singh, head priest, to break his fast as they were satisfied that the substance of the pledge had been conceded.

Sant Fateh Singh ended his 22-day fast at 8.30 a.m. on January 9, 1961. This was followed by the Punjab Government's lifting all restrictions, and by the release of all prisoners. According to the official figures, 30,000 had been arrested since the beginning of the agitation on May 24, 1960.

The declaration by the Prime Minister about the whole of the Punjab being Punjabi-speaking State and the implied acceptance by Master Tara Singh of this, should have been used to demand that statutory shape be given to this declaration by recognising Punjabi in Gurmukhi script as the State language for the whole of the Punjab, which had ended the controversy so far as the Sikh demand was concerned. This would have shifted the onus of struggle to the opposition, which did not want imposition of Punjabi on certain areas of the Punjab. The fact that the opposition apprehended such an imposition was obvious when Professor Sher Singh, the then Chairman of the Action Committee of the Arya Samaj and General Secretary of Vishal Haryana Pradesh Party, later Minister of State in the Centre, told a press conference at New Delhi on 6th February, 1961, that the people of Haryana would resist an agreement declaring the Punjab as unilingual State. Professor Sher Singh also added that the Prime Minister's statement that the Punjab was a unilingual State meant that Punjabi would be imposed on Haryana at all levels. He declared, "Let us give a stern warning that the people of Haryana will not submit to it." The Bhavanagar declaration by the Prime Minister unfortunately was not utilised to its advantage by the Akali Dal, and a Himalayan blunder was committed by Master Tara Singh when, soon after, at a press conference at his house, he said, "The battle for the attainment of Punjabi Suba would continue. The suspension of the struggle is only a truce or cease-fire to create a good atmosphere for talks." This statement gave an impression to the Sikh masses in general that the battle for the Punjabi Suba had been lost, and the

pledge for it had been broken at the instance of Master Tara Singh. Quite a sizeable crowd booed Master Tara Singh at a Dewan at Manji Sahib on the night of the 11th January, 1961, resulting in exchange of blows between the two parties. He had to end his speech abruptly in the Dewan held on the 12th January, 1961, again due to disturbance. The Sikh gathering at Muktsar refused to hear him. His influence as a leader was on the wane.

The meeting of the Shiromani Akali Dal thereafter was held on January 16, 1961, at Amritsar, wherein the Dal reiterated its confidence in Master Tara Singh and "appreciated his wisdom in having the fast broken and condemned the agitation against him," and passed the resolution demanding that, "In order to achieve the earliest settlement of this problem, we would like discussions as promised by the Prime Minister, to be held as early as possible, so that all the aspects of the Punjabi Suba problem are fully examined and a satisfactory agreement reached." The assertion by Master Tara Singh that the battle for the Punjabi Suba was yet to conclude was exploited by the opposition, which said, that Master Tara Singh had failed. Chief Minister Kairon speaking at a press conference on January 23, 1961, declared that the movement had failed.

The expected meeting between Sant Fateh Singh and the Prime Minister was scheduled for February 8, 1961, when the Akali Dal Working Committee held its sitting on the 5th February under the Chairmanship of Master Tara Singh, and again adopted a memorandum containing a demand seeking the bifurcation of the Punjab. It would have been more advisable for the Shiromani Akali Dal to have accepted the declaration, and sought of the Prime Minister its statutory shape, which could have been amended to the extent of excluding some areas. But the fates had decreed otherwise. Talks took place on the 8th February between the two leaders, but it was obvious from the very outset that there was no prospect of a settlement. Sant Fateh Singh speaking that evening at a reception, said, "I had a very free and frank talk with the Prime Minister this morning. We discussed a number

of matters and the remaining things will be discussed in the next meeting," and added, "we should not expect a quick decision from the Government, or from the Prime Minister, as big people have bigger problems. The Prime Minister has to keep in view, and consider the interests of other communities before taking this decision." This was an indication that the Prime Minister was taking a stand on the opposition of the Hindus to the creation of the Punjabi Suba.

The next meeting of Shiromani Akali Dal was held on March 1, 1961, wherein Master Tara Singh was re-elected as the President and the demand for the Punjabi Suba was reiterated in the following words :

"The fact remains that the present Punjab contains some areas which are not Punjabi-speaking. The Shiromani Akali Dal, therefore, demands that non-Punjabi speaking Areas should be cut off, to create a unilingual Punjab." This was another tactical mistake. The cutting off should have been left to the opposition, who would have fought for it. Sant Fateh Singh, however, tried to give a favourable interpretation to this demand by declaring at a conference at Sangrur on March 28, 1961, that, "He did not want any boundary wall between the various religions, rather he wanted that the areas where the Punjabi language was spoken by the majority of the people should recognise Punjabi with Gurmukhi script as a State language".

Further talks between Sant Fateh Singh and the Prime Minister were fixed for May 12, 1961, but efforts were made by the people who were opposed to the creation of Punjabi Suba, to ensure the failure of parleys. Chief Minister Kairon again charged Master Tara Singh with conspiracy with Pakistan, which provoked a retort by Master Tara Singh insinuating that the statement was inspired by the Prime Minister. In a statement on May 11, 1961, Master Tara Singh said, "Sant Fateh Singh and those who accompanied him told me that during their talks with the Prime Minister, Mr. Nehru had said that he was not prepared to hand over the Punjab to irresponsible persons like Master Tara Singh. From this it would appear that a lack of confidence is the main hurdle in

the way of meeting our demand for Punjabi-speaking State. I, therefore, offer to retire completely from public life and leave my beloved country for ever." Such a statement from Master Tara Singh and the insinuation by Chief Minister Kairon, created an atmosphere which was not helpful to successful negotiations. Hence when Sant Fateh Singh met Nehru on May 12, 1961, the Prime Minister told him that it was a considered decision of the Government of India that the formation of the Punjabi Suba was neither in the interest of the Punjab nor in the interest of the country. While expressing his readiness to do everything for the development of the Punjabi language, he finally turned down the demand of the Punjabi Suba. This ended the talks. On his return from the interview, Sant Fateh Singh gave an indication in a press conference that he might again resort to a fast unto death for the achievement of the Punjabi-speaking State. He said that he had tried to convince Nehru of the rightness of his cause, and nothing was placed to counter the claim, but, "reasons and logic cannot carry any weight with the Government which is intoxicated with power and proud of its police and force. A deaf ear was turned to our feeble voice." He concluded, "Now I feel that when stone-hearted men have not been moved by the arrest of 57,129 persons, the death of about dozen of young men, and eight months of peaceful and non-violent agitation, and on whom the effect of 23 days' fast was only momentary, there was little hope of justice unless a supreme sacrifice is made. He announced that he would for the cause stake his life again. On the same day, the Shiromani Akali Dal Working]Committee passed a resolution demanding a high level probe into the allegations against Master Tara Singh by Chief Minister Kairon, and other Congress leaders, of collusion with Pakistan. This was, "false and malicious" and was "a part of government's efforts to find every possible excuse for refusing to create a Punjabi-speaking State."

With the failure of the talks, a wave of disponency and dejection swept over the Sikh masses, particularly over its youth, and it began to be discussed what new steps should be taken when 10 years of suffering and sacrifices by the Sikhs

had not produced any result. The total number of the arrests in the entire country in freedom struggle during the individual disobedience movement in 1942 did not exceed 31,000. The Sikhs during the past 8 or 10 years had sent to jail many times that number, and during the last 8 months more than 55,000 persons had been taken into custody. It was in these circumstances, that Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh made an offer to the Akali Dal Working Committee to permit either of them to go on fast unto death again, to make the Prime Minister and his colleagues see reason and accept the demand. The Working Committee of the Akali Dal held its sitting on the May 17, 1961, and in a resolution expressed surprise that the Prime Minister and the Government of India should reiterate their refusal to be convinced of the legitimacy of the demand for a Punjabi-speaking State, despite the tremendous sacrifices the Sikhs had made for the cause. The resolution conveyed that the Dal was astounded that in the first two meetings with Sant Fateh Singh, the Prime Minister discussed the reasons for and against the Punjabi Suba, but suddenly announced the Government of India's refusal in the third meeting. The resolution ended thus: "The Working Committee, however, after, prolonged deliberation, has come to the conclusion that the matter is so serious, and its consequences vis-a-vis the nation as a whole are so grave, that before allowing such a step (i.e. a fast unto death) to be taken, the views of the General House of the Shiromani Akali Dal and other prominent men of the nation must be heard."

It was, therefore decided that a meeting be called on May 28, 1961, to which other prominent men would also be invited and decision on the request of Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh about going on fast unto death would be taken.

The Working Committee of Shiromani Akali Dal held its sitting on May 27, 1961, a day before the session of the General Body, and considered Master Tara Singh's offer of a fast unto death. An eight-man committee, comprising of Harbans Singh Gujral, Malik Mukhbain Singh, Ch. Karta Singh, Dr. Harbant Singh, K.G. Jodh and others, was formed

to consider the situation and advise the General Body. The General Body of the Shiromani Akali Dal held its sitting on May 28, 1961, which was more a convention than a meeting of the General Body. The special invitees who participated in the gathering were Dr. S.D. Kitchlu, Kali Charan Sharma, Mr. Sunder Lal, President of the All India Peace Council, Harcharan Singh, former Pepsu Minister, Seth Ram Nath, former Chairman Punjabi Regional Committee. Udharn Singh Nagoke, the then President of the Swatanter Party, Harbhajan Singh, leader of the Punjab P.S.P., Mr. K.G. Jodh, General Secretary of the All India Linguistic State Conference, and many other prominent persons. These special invitees addressed the gathering, giving support to the cause of Punjabi Suba. Pandit Sunder Lal said, "Your decision will have our blessing." Dr. Kitchlu, though of weak health, stood the strain of the speech, and said that the Government was inefficient and incapable, and was leading the country astray, and that Nehru was crippling nationalism in the name of secularism, and the peace and progress of the country would be retarded if some communities were not happy. The following main resolution was moved by Sant Fateh Singh, who did not make any speech and was supported by Gurnam Singh who explained the reasons for the failure of the talks between Sant Fateh Singh and the Prime Minister. The following resolution was passed :

"This General Body of the Shiromani Akali Dal resolves that :

(a) Since before and even after the partition of the country the Sikhs, who spiritually, culturally and historically constituted a firm, distinct and indissoluble entity, have always in their contacts and policies deemed themselves as a living and dynamic limb of the Indian Nation, and it is for this reason that on all decisive occasions they have presumed good faith and neighbourly charity on the part of the Indian leaders in general, and the Congress party in particular ; but,

(b) Ever since the Congress leaders came to supreme power in this country, they have dealt with and treated the Sikhs as if they were alien people under the heels of a

conquering race, and assumed colonial power invested with the mission of subjugating and absorbing others; and it is from this basic attitude that the gross discrimination against, and sustained suppression of, the Sikh individuals and masses has proceeded in post-partition India as a consequence of which;

(c) Growing unrest and continuous agitation in, and spiritual tribulation of, the Sikhs have marked the Indian scene during the last 12 years or more, the latest manifestation of which is the Punjabi Suba battle of the year 1960, which the Sikh leaders readily suspended on the assurance of the Prime Minister Nehru to the effect that;

(i) The Ruling party would examine all Sikh grievances in general, and the question of formation of a unilingual Punjabi-speaking State in particular, dispassionately, sincerely and thoroughly in the train of reason and persuasion, and purely in democratic context.

(ii) To decide and take action in the matter without any mental reservations whatever such as might operate to the disadvantage of the Sikhs; and

(iii) These assurances of the Prime Minister were not to be interpreted as merely legalistic utterances, but definitely as a gesture of broad goodwill, in which the concession to the demand for Punjabi Suba that had compelled Sant Fateh Singh to undertake fast unto death was implicit.

2. Now, however, the Sikhs, after a summary and unilateral termination of the Sant Fateh Singh Nehru talks, are once again confronted with the painful truth that the ruling elite of India;

(i) Refuses to alter its fundamental attitude towards the Sikhs;

(ii) Sees no use in placing any faith in the Sikhs; and

(iii) Continues to base its tactics on the twin wheels of mendacious propaganda, brute force, and under these circumstances, the Sikhs clearly recognise that the alternative before them is either to make a supreme sacrifice, which may ensure them an honourable place and existence in their country, or to submit and perish.

3. The General Body of the Shiromani Akali Dal is quite clear as to which alternative the Sikhs will inevitably choose, and the question of the offer of a fast unto death by top leaders, which we have considered now, is an unambiguous indication of their choice.

4. After profound and careful consideration of all the aspects and implications of the matter, the following conclusions appear inescapable :—

(a) That the Prime Minister Nehru made an appeal for discontinuance of the fast by Sant Fateh Singh with a view to lure him into parleys, with the pre-conceived object of sidetracking the unprecedented Sikh mass protest against the planned discrimination and sustained persecution of the Sikhs by the Ruling elite of India ;

(b) So as to refuse to honour the spirit of his previous assurances at such a time and in such a manner as to afford the ruling Congress politicians the maximum tactical advantages of the impending General Elections of 1962, and against this background, the future action to be taken for the creation of Punjabi Suba is to be determined and decided upon.

For these reasons, it is resolved that Master Tara Singh be allowed to follow the dictates of his conscience in the matter and the manner of undertaking the fast unto death at a proper time, and this process of individual self-immolation to continue till such time that the conscience of Indian citizens in particular, and the world in general, is aroused, so as to compel the present ruling elite to abandon its basic, undemocratic and anti-sikh policies, or their position of unbridled power, and concede the just and legitimate demand of a unilingual Punjabi-speaking State.

May God and the spirit of the Gurus guide us in the coming struggle of life and death !”

Supplementing this resolution Master Tara Singh said in a statement, “I do not want to die but while living I do not want to see the Sikh Panth insulted and the Sikhs treated as inferior to other communities. I shall begin my fast unto death from August 15, and continue it till the demand for the Punjabi Suba is conceded.”

Once again, Giani Kartar Singh the erstwhile chief lieutenant of Master Tara Singh, was found handy to speak the next day on behalf of the Punjab Government and declare, "that the Government will boldly face the situation arising out of the decision taken by Master Tara Singh." Soon after the Punjab Government issued two separate orders banning publication of any material relating to the Punjabi Suba, the partition of the Punjab, the language controversy or any fact connected with the agitation, in the akali papers the "Parbhat" and the "Jathedar" and arresting 50 prominent Akalis under security proceedings. Master Tara Singh, however, advised the Sikhs not to court arrest as the technique of the movement had been switched from mass agitation to individual martyrdom and self-immolation. The Shiromani Akali Dal passed a resolution on June 27, 1961, condemning the arrests, and appealed to the majority community to keep the minority contended and happy. Harcharan Singh Hudiara, the then Vice-President of the Shiromani Akali Dal, addressing a Panthic Conference subsequent to this resolution, gave a warning saying, "To save the Sikh community from countless atrocities and to prick the conscience of the 'National Government', Master Tara Singh will go on fast unto death on August 15. I can guess that after Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh, the new leaders might give a call for an independent Punjabi State instead of Punjabi Suba."

The Punjab Government and the Congress leaders embarked on the old strategy of inspiring statements by Hindu leaders, and handy Sikhs, in condemning the demand for Punjabi Suba and the fast of Master Tara Singh. The Hindi Raksha Sammelan, representing various organisations of the Hindus, passed a resolution on June 12, 1961, that, "The Hindi Raksha Samiti is most anxious that an early and satisfactory solution of the language controversy should be found out. It is, however, most essential that the solution of this problem should be based on a recognition of the fact that the Punjab is a bilingual State, where both languages, Hindi and Punjabi, have to flourish side by side without any restriction or compulsion." Hukam Singh, the then Deputy Speaker, speaking on August

2, 1961, said, "I, and so many friends, have misgivings that the fast will be detrimental to the community, harmful to the country, and directly opposed to the basic beliefs which are so sacred to us." Another Sikh Minister, Gian Singh Rarewala, suggested the creation of greater Punjab including Himachal Pradesh as a counter to Master Tara Singh's fast.

The Punjab Government issued, on August 14, 1961, a blanket order to all the newspapers of the State, banning publication of news and views relating to or connected with the Punjabi Suba and allied matters, but this order was withdrawn on August 18, when the Editors of dailies in a joint meeting, agreed to cooperate in with-holding the inflammatory news and views. These restrictions on the press and indiscriminate arrests of the Sikhs and other repressive measures, stood in the way of sufficient publicity of Master Tara Singh's fast. However, Master Tara Singh, in a statement to the press on July 12, declared that he was prepared to agree to plebiscite on the issue of Punjabi Suba in the demarcated Punjabi region even though he considered this also to be discrimination against the Sikhs.

The Prime Minister wrote a letter on August 10, 1961, to Master Tara Singh, appealing to him to give up the idea of fast, to which Sant Fateh Singh wrote back on behalf of the Working Committee, suggesting talks on the basis of Punjabi Suba. In the mean-time Master Tara Singh went on fast on August 15, 1961, in the presence of a huge congregation that had gathered at Sri Manji Sahib after having taken a pledge at Sri Akal Takhat and Ardasa at Sri Darbar Sahib. He declared that he would only take lime water during his fast.

Sant Fateh Singh met the Prime Minister on the 24th and the 25th August, accompanied by Gurnam Singh. No progress was made in the talks, though a suggestion was made that the Regional Committee in the alternative should be given powers of legislation and converted into some kind of a sub-legislature. This too was not accepted. Therefore, Sant Fateh Singh in a statement to the press said, "There was no meeting ground. We repeatedly asked for a counter proposal but no reasonable

and honourable proposal was made by the Prime Minister."

The Prime Minister recapitulated the course of the talks in his statement on 28th August 1961, while placing on the table of the house copies of the correspondence which passed between him and Master Tara Singh and declared that, "The question, therefore, of demanding Punjabi Suba in order to give facilities to the Punjabi language does not arise. The demand for a Punjabi Suba can only be considered as a communal demand even though it is given a linguistic basis. It seems to us that the acceptance of the proposal, which basically was communal, would be wrong in the formation of the State." He, however, said, "It had repeatedly been said that there was discrimination against the Sikhs though instances of this had not been pointed out. I suggested, however, that if there was any such apprehension, a high level inquiry could be made into the matter to find out if there had been any such discrimination." This, in a way, closed the doors of negotiation on the basis of the bifurcation of the Punjab.

The deterioration in the condition of Master Tara Singh's health due to fasting at his old age was a matter of deep concern to the Sikhs at large. No way was being found by which his life could be saved, despite efforts of Hardit Singh Malik, once an Ambassador for India in Paris. It was being appreciated amongst the Sikhs that the death of Master Tara Singh as a result of the fast would create a gulf between the Hindus and the Sikhs, which would be as wide and as deep as that which came in between the Sikhs and the Muslims on the martyrdom of two Sahibzadas at the hands of the Moghuls. This had to be avoided in the interest of the country. The Congress leadership, however, was unconcerned at the results of the fast. It was in such a situation that 13 Congress members of the Lok Sabha moved a motion, that the statement made by the Prime Minister in the Lok Sabha on the August 28, 1961, regarding the Punjabi Suba and the fast of Master Tara Singh be discussed. The objective was to strengthen hands of the Prime Minister to fight the Punjabi Suba demand. The debate was fixed by the Speaker for August 29,

1961. This debate was momentous, and I felt that I must participate. Hence I sought the permission of the Speaker to speak and secured it. I prepared the script of my speech according to my convictions, which was also in accordance with the announcement of the Prime Minister. My objective further, was to press for a unilateral declaration on these lines by the Central Government, which would be, in a way, an acceptance of the demand of the Akali Dal for having a unilingual Punjabi-speaking State. I was surprised when I was informed by the Speaker on the morning of August 29, 1961, through a messenger that the Congress Party through its Chief Whip, the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, had sent four names as their speakers in the debate. I was further surprised, also when I learnt from the Minister, that Hukam Singh was one of the nominees who would oppose the demand for Punjabi Suba. On my request to the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs for being allowed to speak as an additional speaker, explaining to him that I was to speak on the lines of the Prime Minister's announcement and declaration, I was astounded when I was told that I could not be allowed to speak, because, like Maulana Azad, I might qualify my opposition to bifurcation with 'ifs' and 'buts'. It was a great shock to hear that even Maulana Azad, who had stood by the National Congress all his life, and suffered for it, and had even been called a 'show-boy' of the Congress, should be ridiculed thus by some of these high-ups in the Congress circles.

More shocking, however, was the speech, which Hukam Singh made on that day. Hukam Singh had been running an English weekly, "The Spokesman" which came to be his personal paper for which he wrote the leaderettes, though there was another editor in name. This weekly had been supporting the demand for Punjabi Suba. It was strange that he opposed the Punjabi Suba demand during the debate declaring: "Punjabi Suba—some honourable members want (to know) that—I had been on the floor of the house advocating this cause. Many a time, I had stood and pleaded for it. But there are other reasons that out-weight it at this moment. I consider, Hindu-Sikh harmony is more important than getting

this demand conceded at this moment. If by proceeding in this manner, we create tension, and a permanent gulf between the Hindus and Sikhs. I would rather not have the Punjabi Suba at this moment. Communal harmony between the Hindus and the Sikhs is more dear to me than any demand for the linguistic State. If once that is given and the chances for that get remote, certainly I would not go in for that demand."⁸

The Prime Minister was forthright in his opposition and warned that the creation of Punjabi Suba would be absolutely a disaster leading to trouble in the State. He said, "So these passions have been roused. Now, at this stage, apart from the other reasons at any stage, at this stage, to try to do this is to invite trouble. I do not know, if a Punjabi Suba was formed, I certainly would not like to be in that Punjabi Suba, or, for that matter, a Minister or any person in authority, because he will have to face the opposition of a very large part of the population in terms of statistics, it may be 45% ; or it may be more, or it may be a little less. How could he function with 45% of the population not agreeing with him, mind you, not on the question of language, because 45% itself would be speaking Punjabi, but because of the way it has grown up—there is no doubt about it that it has grown up, not as a linguistic issue but as a communal issue ; I have no doubt about it—because it has grown up as a communal issue, other communities take objection ? And they oppose it, and they will go on opposing it, for Punjabis have many virtues, but yet they are a very quarrelsome people. They quarrel amongst themselves. How any person, any thinking person, whatever his original views might have been could possibly say, "Do this or agree to do it now or six months later" surprises me, because just it cannot be done. The Prime Minister, speaking in the Rajya Sabha the next day was more unequivocal when he said, "We come to the firm conclusion that we cannot agree even in principle to the Punjabi Suba demand" admitting at the same time, that the consequences of agreeing to it are far graver, far more far-reaching, and would affect the whole future of the Punjab and India." He pronounced with

emphasis : "I cannot guarantee about the distant future. Nobody can. We are talking of the present and we cannot allow such a thing to pass by without making our position quite clear on this issue." He warned the house that if effect was given to the proposal of Punjabi Suba, "It will be resisted—I do not say there is going to be a civil war or all that. It will not be resisted by the out-siders, but by the people in that Suba." He meant that the Punjab Hindus would resist by violence such proposals. This pronouncement in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha had a stunning effect on the Sikh leaders in the Akali Dal camp, where all hopes of a settlement were thus dashed to the ground. It was generally known that Chief Minister Kairon's influence was behind the Prime Minister's announcement in order to keep the situation tense, and thus retain power in his own hands.

The Akali Dal held its meeting soon after this debate, and declared in its resolution, that, "Whenever the people's voices are stifled through a subjugation of civil liberties, where all democratic and moral means had failed to meet the rigidity of the Government ; this democratic social group (Akali Dal) rather than taking to disruptive methods, has come forward to lay down the life of its dearest leader." The statement to the press on behalf of the Akali Dal reiterated that the Akali Dal would stick to its programme to follow up Master Tara Singh's fast with a similar fast by other Sikh leaders. "We have studied Mr. Nehru's speech in the Parliament and note with extreme regret that a person of Mr. Nehru's level has become a source of positive incitement against this small minority." The statement further said, "Specifying the highest principle of secularism, Mr. Nehru has thrown all principles of democratic conventions to the winds right in his own country."¹⁰

Faced with the inevitable death of Master Tara Singh due to the declaration of the Prime Minister, public leaders of standing and status began to appeal to Master Tara Singh to break his fast for the sake of the country. Rajagopalachari in a statement said, "I wish as ardently as any other, that Master Tara Singh should not fast to die. No one will be

gladder than I, if he breaks the fast. His demand should not be misconstrued or confused, but should be dealt with justly. That Sikhs will happen to be in the majority, if the Punjabi language is recognised in certain areas and given identical treatment, should not be a reason to deny it equal treatment. I do earnestly hope that Prime Minister will stand for fair and equal treatment." Jai Parkash Narain, another prominent leader, met Master Tara Singh on 1st September, and tried to persuade him to break his fast on the basis of arbitration or by the appointment of a Commission. After this interview, Master Tara Singh said in a statement to the press, "I had once suggested the names of Mr. Rajagopalachari, Mr. Ajoy Ghosh and Mr. Ashok Mehta as arbitrators on the issue, but my proposal fell on deaf ears. Now if a neutral man like Jai Parkash Narain is entrusted with the task of arbitration, it will be acceptable to me." To a specific question whether, in case his suggestion was accepted, he would terminate his fast, Master Tara Singh replied, "Naturally it follows."

The Punjab Government extended its repressive measures to other parties also, when they showed any sympathy towards the Punjabi Suba demand. The Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of India, in their meeting at Delhi on September 13, 1961, strongly criticised the Punjab Government for the brutal mass repression, let loose in the State, and urged the Centre to intervene in the matter, to stop Sardar Baldev Singh Kairon from pursuing the dangerous course he had taken." Soon after, the headquarters of the Communist Party at Jullundur were sealed after a police raid on September 14, 1961, and the entire staff of their paper "Nawan Zehana" and the Awami Printing Press were arrested. The offices of the Communist Party and the printing presses were sealed, and the police posted outside the building. These repressive measures were not limited to the terrorisation of the Sikhs and their sympathisers, but a virulent propaganda was resorted to, maligning Master Tara Singh. Chief Minister Kairon speaking to the press on September 15, said that certain Akali leaders had liaison with Pakistan officials, and were giving exaggerated reports about preparations being made in Sri

Darbar Sahib to harm Indian leaders, and when he was asked what was his source of information he replied, "Secret sources in Pakistan."

Mediators and well-meaning friends, however, kept approaching the Central leaders to avert the death of Master Tara Singh, and public opinion on the subject became very vocal. Therefore, the Prime Minister declared in a press conference, that the Punjabi Suba issue would not be referred as such to the High Power Commission proposed by him in the Parliament, "But how far it creeps in, I cannot say" and added, "It is for the Commission to decide whether the issue came within the broad term of reference or not." Nehru further said that his offer made in Parliament to add further power to the Regional Committees of Punjab and High Power Commission to examine charges of discrimination against the Sikhs was still valid." This declaration created the expectation that the Prime Minister might agree to Master Tara Singh's demand about the personnel comprising the High Power Commission.

Accordingly, Gurnam Singh, on behalf of the Akali Dal, met Lal Bahadur Shastri on September 18, pressing for a broad scope of reference and favourable personnel, but returned to Amritsar disappointed. Then the Working Committee reiterated in its resolution that mere 'creeping in' of the Punjabi Suba issue before High Power Commission was not enough. There must be a clear assurance from the Government, that the Commission will be free to examine the issue. On the question of the personnel of the Commission, although Gurnam Singh was reported to have brought some names suggested by a mediator at Delhi, the Working Committee refused to consider them in view of the over-all atmosphere of resentment against the Government. The following statement was given to the press on behalf of the Shiromani Akali Dal on September 29, 1961, "On getting a report from S. Gurnam Singh on his talks with the Government, while Master Tara Singh is lying on the verge of death and is physically incapacitated, let us place on record that the present Government does not want to arrive at any reasonable decision with regard to the forma-

tion of the Punjabi-speaking State. Through a slow process of talks and more talks, it is only trying to reduce the force of impact of Master Ji's fast on the conscience of the people all over the world ; otherwise the ruling party, so it appears, had taken a firm decision long ago on Master Ji's death, and we doubt very much if it is at all serious about accepting any plausible or rational approach. We would, therefore, request the Maharaja of Patiala, while thanking him to please put an end to his talks with the Government which is intransigent, and is not tenable to any reasonable or democratic approach to a rational solution that one can think of, and which it seems, has positively decided on Master Tara Singh's death." The statement further said that the Akali Dal had decided that the Punjabi-speaking area be declared a Punjabi-speaking State, which was supported by all parties except the Jan Sangh and the Congress and, "we have further declared that if a new line of demarcation, which may annex some additional Punjabi-speaking area is drawn, we will accept such a new boundary line as well. We have declared that if such a new demarcation results in making the Hindus a majority community and the Sikhs a minority community in the Punjabi-speaking area, it will be acceptable to us because the demand is linguistic and not communal."

Chief Minister Kairon was, however, following his own technique of inspiring statements and moves from the Congress stooges in his attempt to demoralise the Sikhs. Rajinder Singh, M.L.A., moved a resolution on September 21, 1961, recommending to the Government to take suitable measures, so that no religious or charitable institution was used by any individual for political purposes. This resolution was accepted by the Vidhan Sabha, only five Sikh M.L.As. and Abdul Ghani Dar opposing the resolution. In a seventy-minute speech, Chief Minister Kairon declared his determination to oppose the creation of Punjabi Suba—come what might—saying, "that Punjabi Suba meant the end of Punjab both for Hindus and Sikhs." This was followed by an appeal by 52 Sikh members of the legislature to Master Tara Singh in the following words : "We, the Sikh members of the two Houses of the Punjab State

Legislature, therefore, request Master Tara Singh to maintain the sanctity of Sri Darbar Sahib by giving up his fast forthwith, and thus create a healthy atmosphere in the interest of harmonious relations amongst the communities in a State which has already suffered during the post-partition period." The signatories included Giani Kartar Singh, Master Gurbanta Singh, Niranjana Singh Talib, Dr. Parkash Kaur, Bhupinder Singh, Prem Singh Lalpura, Pritpal Kaur, Rajinder Singh, Jasdev Singh Sandhu, Ajmer Singh, Kartar Singh Diwana, Harparkash Kaur, Rajinder Singh and Bhag Singh.

The mediators, however, had not given up hope, and expected a favourable assurance on the basis of Nehru's statement in the Lok Sabha on the 28th August and a statement to the press on the 17th September. Master Tara Singh had also agreed as far back as on 1st September, 1961, to the appointment of a High Power Commission on the issue, provided it comprised gentlemen of integrity and impartiality, feeling convinced that he had a fool-proof case, and would be able to get the verdict in his favour from the Commission. Therefore, the negotiations by the mediators had as their basis the broad scope of reference which should not shut out adjudication upon the justification of Punjabi Suba, and a favourable personnel which had the approval of the Akali Dal. Hardit Singh Malik had been long known for his public and panthic spirit, and also enjoyed the confidence of Master Tara Singh on account of his old contacts with him. He met Home Minister Shastri along with the Maharaja of Patiala on the 1st October, 1961, and coming out of the meeting, said to the pressmen that "I found goodwill on all sides." What transpired between the mediators and the Home Minister on the 1st of October, and what assurances were given is a matter for historians to probe, as different versions have been given, but the conclusion was that Master Tara Singh broke his fast on October 1, 1961, at 7 p.m. on the 48th day of his fast by sipping lemon juice mixed with honey and water, offered by Sant Fateh Singh and the Maharaja of Patiala. The ending of the fast had been delayed, because the Working Committee of the Akali Dal took 90 minutes to confirm the

decision. The members of the Working Committee, including Sant Fateh Singh, had invited Hardit Singh Malik the main negotiator and mediator, Malik Mukhbain Singh and Harcharan Singh Jeji, two close friends of Master Tara Singh, to a closed-door meeting in the hut of the fasting leader, and it was after that, that fast was broken. The breaking of the fast was presumably on the assurance of the favourable scope of reference and personnel of the High Power Commission and restoration of civil liberties, and the release of the arrested persons. Soon after, the following announcement was notified by the Government of India :

"Various charges have been made about discrimination against the Sikhs in Punjab. This has culminated in Master Tara Singh, a veteran Akali leader, taking the extreme step of fast unto death. The Government is strongly of the opinion that in a democratic setup, such an extreme step is neither called for nor justified and therefore, the fast should be terminated immediately ; however, in the present context of doubt and suspicion the Government has given thought to this matter and considered it advisable in accordance with the announcement made by the Prime Minister in the Parliament to appoint a Commission.

"This Commission may go into the general question of discrimination, and examine any charges of alleged differential treatment or grievances of the Sikhs. The appointment of the Commission would naturally take some time, but propose to do so as early as possible.

"News has been received that Master Tara Singh has ended his fast. The Government have learnt this with much satisfaction. They will now proceed to take necessary steps for the appointment of the Commission."

Master Tara Singh also received a personal telegram from the Prime Minister to the following effect, "I have learnt with much pleasure and satisfaction that you propose to end your fast this afternoon. I hope this will take place and that you will speedily return to health. I send you my good wishes. The National Integration Council, which is meeting here for the last four days, also expresses satisfaction at the news that

you propose to break your fast and has asked me to send you their greetings."

The satisfaction of National Integration Council conveyed in the personal telegram of the Prime Minister was very significant. The tragic irony in the Indian political scene had been that, while Master Tara Singh, an undisputed leader of an important minority, was on a fast unto death for an objective and a cause which was in consonance with the policy and the profession of the Congress elsewhere in the country and implemented there, the same thing was being refused in Northern India, yet the National Integration Council, a Government sponsored body, supposed to comprise minority representatives, meant to chalk out ways and means of emotional integration for the creation of one nation, did not at all give its attention to the fast unto death of such a leader, whose death would have been the greatest hurdle in the way of such integration. This callous and calculated indifference inevitably leads to the conclusion, that National Integration of the country means an integration as a concept, which the majority desires, and which, from its point of view, means either absorption of the minorities in the majority, or their subjugation. This ridiculous position was spelt out from the supposed satisfaction conveyed by the National Integration Council at the breaking of the fast of Master Tara Singh. The status of the National Integration Council became more obvious a few years later, when Jai Parkash Narain did not attend its meeting at Srinagar in 1968. He then wrote to the Prime Minister that party politics itself is a factor responsible for the growth of the force of disintegration. He said in conclusion, "The present composition of the Council, which is made up mostly of Ministers and Parliamentarians, is likely to give an impression the task of National Integration is one that is largely, if not wholly, to be accomplished by the State. This as you know, is far from being the case. Indeed more has to be done at the people's level in this regard than by the State."

Soon after breaking his fast, Master Tara Singh, in a statement to the press, visualised a political settlement with

the Government even before the Sikh grievances, including the question of Punjabi Suba were referred to the High Power Commission. He also made a definite statement, which was not contradicted at the time, that the names of the designated members of the Commission had been disclosed to him by the mediators, and that he was satisfied with them. It was surprising that Master Tara Singh, in spite of the maltreatment at the hands of the Congress big guns, still had faith in Nehru, and expected to bring him round to his point of view when he hoped to meet him after his convalescence and had talks on the issues. Later events were to prove, how mistaken he was.

The Arya Samaj elements in the Punjab were not inactive and were out to sabotage the prospects or possibility of any settlement between the Sikhs and the Government of India. Jagat Narain then an M.L.A., and Inder Sen, Secretary, Punjab Hindi Raksha Samiti, in a statement to the press on October 6, 1961, warned the Government against any political settlement with the Akalis before the appointment of the proposed High Power Commission declaring, "The Hindus of Punjab would not accept the settlement."¹¹ One of the terms of the settlement had been that civil liberties would be restored, and the detainees and the prisoners would be released, but no steps were taken in that direction. Mohan Singh, a son of Master Tara Singh, was arrested on October 14, 1961. The Working Committee of the Akali Dal had to pass a resolution in its meeting on October 22, 1961, expressing its deep regret at the policy of the Government in its refusal to honour the terms of the settlement which had ended Master Tara Singh's fast. The resolution said, "The Process of the release of Akali leaders is too slow. A number of them were not released, while some others were re-arrested after their release. Cases against the Akalis have not been withdrawn, nor were their arms licences restored. The political sufferers amongst the Akalis, who had been considered fit for relief were being denied relief now." Hardit Singh Malik, one of the mediators, interviewed Home Minister Shastri on October 24, 1961, complaining of the non-implementation of the understanding arrived at through him, but without any response. The tenseness of the situation

continued, and the anger in the Sikh masses gathered strength, making Master Tara Singh the target for having broken his fast without obtaining the objective or assurance thereon.

Master Tara Singh, thereafter, had to explain the circumstances in which he was persuaded to break his fast. He said, "When Malik Hardit Singh and his companions met me after talks with the Government representatives, they narrated to me everything at length. I had told them that I was dying for the sake of truth, justice and renunciation, and not for any greed or any narrow mindedness or any self-interest or in the interest of Sikhs alone. After some discussion they reminded me that my pledge was, "I shall die or get Punjabi Suba". The real object is the achievement of the Punjabi Suba. He (Malik Hardit Singh) then said, "I am not saying that you should postpone the Punjabi Suba demand to save your life, but I am merely saying that you should postpone your fast by a few days for the sake of achieving Punjabi Suba. By adhering to the pledge for obtaining Punjabi Suba, you may use it in a manner that it should bring success and not defeat. The success lends strength which is derived from unity. The Sikhs will disintegrate and with it, will finish Punjabi Suba. Therefore, retain your life for a few days more for the sake of Punjabi Suba " Master Tara Singh explained that listening to these arguments he felt that he was not strong enough to go into details, therefore, he requested Hardit Singh Malik to discuss the matter with the Working Committee of the Akali Dal and that he would accept their decision. After this, the Working Committee members and also the Maharaja of Patiala and Sant Fateh Singh, made him end his fast. He said in conclusion, "They have ended my fast, but not my pledge to achieve Punjabi Suba. I cannot say anything at this stage. It will be possible to say something after knowing the wishes of the people and the prevailing circumstances. After five months I have begun to see the newspapers and hold political discussion."¹² This statement was abundantly indicative of the fact that Master Tara Singh had been persuaded to break his fast on certain assurances.

Master Tara Singh reached Delhi on October 28, 1961, and

had an interview with the Prime Minister on the 30th, October, when Malik Hardit Singh was also present. The Akali Leader told the pressmen thereafter that, "The announcement of the Commission would be made shortly" and added that the Prime Minister was in a better mood than when he met him last at Bhavanagar. The High Power Commission was announced within 24 hours of this meeting in the following text :

"Various charges have been made about the discrimination against the Sikhs in the Punjab. The Prime Minister announced in the Parliament on August 28, 1961, that a High Power Inquiry could be made to find out if there was any discrimination. In a communique issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs on 1st October, 1961, it was stated that it was considered advisable to appoint a Commission. The Government of India had accordingly decided to appoint the Commission. The Commission will consist of Mr. S. R. Dass, retired Chief Justice of India, Mr. C. P. Rama Swami Ayyer and Mr. M. C. Chhagla of whom Mr. S. R. Dass shall be the Chairman of the Commission.

"The Commission will enquire into the general question of discrimination and examine any charge of discriminatory treatment or grievances of the Sikhs.

"The Commission may devise its own procedure for the work, but will give an opportunity to the interests concerned to bring in their respective points of view before the Commission. The Commission will report its findings to the Government by December 31, 1961."

The announcement came as a shock to Master Tara Singh, who forthwith protested against the personnel of the Commission, stating that the names originally conveyed to him were not included in it. He also said that the Akali Dal would not be morally bound by the Commission's findings, but the Working Committee of the Akali Dal would take into consideration the matter in all its aspects. It would be recalled that Master Tara Singh had announced immediately after breaking the fast that the names of the proposed members had been disclosed to him by the mediators and that he was satis-

fied. This had not been contradicted then by the Government, but when Master Tara Singh protested about the personnel on its announcement, it was contradicted by the Prime Minister, who denied that an assurance had been given about the names ; "One thing I must make clear. Repeated hints are thrown out either by Master Tara Singh or some one on his behalf about some assurances having been given to him. Whatever has been given has been said in a statement in public. No assurance of any kind had been given except what I have said in Parliament to which I am giving effect."

The Shiromani Akali Dal in its meeting on the 9th November took the following stand in this regard :

"This meeting of the Shiromani Akali Dal Working Committee feels amazed at the attitude of the Government in forming a High Power Commission, the personnel of which was quite different from that which was communicated by the negotiators and the mediators to Master Tara Singh during his fast." The resolution further demanded, "To make amends in the personnel in the light of the spirit shown during the course of negotiations, so as to enable the Akali Dal to cooperate with the Commission, and thus put forward a case for the Punjabi-speaking State, the cause for which they have suffered immensely, and which is based on the principle of equality and justice." This stand of Akali Dal evoked a reply from the Home Minister Shastri on November 13, 1961, admitting that while the Government had agreed to consider the names suggested by the mediators on behalf of the Akali Dal, it was made clear to them, that the choice would be that of the Government. He also admitted that the name of Jai Parkash Narain, suggested by the Akali Dal, was accepted by the Government, but since Mr. Narain was unwilling to serve he could not be appointed a member. The Home Minister further added, "I might mention here that no commitment was made by me, and I told the Maharaja of Patiala that we would consider the name of Mr. Jai Parkash Narain also." The Home Minister further stated, "I might also add that four names referred to in Master Tara Singh's statement were suggested either by the Maharaja of Patiala or some of his

Akali friends. I did not suggest any name at all. There was, however some discussion about the names mentioned, but no assurance was ever given by me that any of the names would finally be selected or chosen by the Government. I hope this makes the position clear, and Master Tara Singh and his colleagues will now appreciate the facts better."

The stand of the Akali Dal about the charge of a breach of faith on the part of Government of India in regard to the personnel of the Commission was clarified in the correspondence that ensued between the Akali Dal and the Prime Minister. The legal adviser to the Shiromani Akali Dal in his letter asserted that a specific assurance had been given through the mediators on the following lines :

"(i) No one connected with Punjab would be taken in the Commission.

(ii) No one connected with politics or any political party would be included in the Commission.

(iii) The names suggested by the Akali Dal would be duly considered while appointing the Commission."

The letter further averred, "On 29th October, 1961, when Master Tara Singh met you and particularly asked to be told the names of the members, you did not think it proper to disclose those, although a few hours later the Commission was announced." The letter further complained, "in view of the fact that Jai Parkash Narain had expressed his inability to serve on the Commission, the Dal feels that it was further obligatory on the Government to apprise Master Tara Singh of the fact. The announcement of the personnel of the Commission has surprised everyone, because not only were the Akali nominees not included, but two persons approved by the Akali representatives and the Home Minister were also excluded."

The Prime Minister in his reply admitted, "that it is true that I stated in the course of our talks that the members of the Commission would be of the highest quality, and that I would endeavour not to appoint any member from Northern India as they were likely to be interested in the politics of Punjab;" but added, "You say in

appointed to the Commission. No contradiction had been issued. The disclosure of the communication by the Prime Minister on January 22, 1962, more than 11 weeks later, had no relevance and could not be considered a cogent and convincing repudiation, when these mediators had not contradicted the claim of Master Tara Singh and the Akali Dal for more than 3 months. These mediators, situated as they were in public life, could not have contradicted the Prime Minister, when directly approached by him, who had earlier disowned and repudiated any such understanding or undertaking. The contradictions in the statements of Prime Minister Nehru and Home Minister Shastri are also significant.

The Dass Commission held its first sitting on December 11, 1961, when a spokesman on behalf of the Akali Dal announced that the offer of cooperation with the Commission had been conditioned on the acceptance of the Akali Dal terms, both about the personnel as well as the scope of reference, and it was stated that the Akali Dal would boycott the Commission as the understanding had not been honoured. How far the boycott was justified is certainly a point which calls for a discussion from different aspects. There was no doubt that the personnel, though very well qualified, could not, from the Akali Dal point of view, be called independent and impartial. S. R. Dass had been the Chief Justice of the Punjab High Court and must have certain prejudices and feelings about the various movements in the Punjab which took place during his tenure. Besides, he was the father-in-law of Mr. Ashok Sen, the then Law Minister of the Government of India. Similarly, it was being said in the press at the time that Mr Chhagla was to be taken into the Union Cabinet. In fact, he was taken later. Therefore, the Akali Dal was justified in objecting to their inclusion in the Commission. Much of the controversy could have been avoided if the Prime Minister Nehru had taken Master Tara Singh into his confidence on October 28, 1961, when he received him. Master Tara Singh had specifically asked for the names, and they were not disclosed, though the announcement of the names was made a few hours later in a Government communique. Why the names were withheld

at that time from Master Tara Singh, was certainly a matter which created suspicion as to the Prime Minister's motives. All the same, it would have been well if the Akali Dal had been advised to participate in the probe and proceedings, and proved by evidence from the long course of events and occurrences, that the non-implementation in Northern India of the policy of creation of linguistic States was certainly an act of discrimination against the Sikhs. Enough material could have been found from the Government records, more from the statements made from time to time by the Congress leaders at the Centre and their stooges in Punjab. It was also possible that the Government of India would have withheld certain files and papers connected with the issue which would have put the Government in the wrong. The scope of reference provided that, "This Commission may go into the general question of discrimination and examine any charges of differential treatment or grievances of the Sikhs" was wide enough to bring in its ambit a probe to expose the Central leadership for the differential treatment. The commission could not have brushed aside the irrefutable and undisputed position which the Sikhs had in this regard. The Sikh leadership had been agitating for long years that they were being discriminated against in all walks of life in the post-partition period, and this could have been exposed and proved when the proceedings of the Commission were open to the public. Therefore, it was certainly a mistake that the Akali Dal did not feel advised to put its case before the Commission.

The boycott on the part of the Akali Dal shortened the proceedings of the Commission as it had no material to adjudicate upon the matter entrusted to it. The Commission had its sitting on January 23, 1962, when only a few individuals sent their representations. The only organisation that participated was the so-called "The Nationalist Sikhs" whose spokesman, Gopal Singh Dardi, appeared presumably on the inspiration and at the instance of Chief Minister Kairon. In his address before the Commission, he denied that there was any discrimination against the Sikhs. He also stated that the Akalis did not represent the Sikh community and their demand

for Punjabi Suba had no mass support. He tried to justify this stand stating that the majority of the members of the Vidhan Sabha were Nationalist Sikhs. Dr. Gopal Singh Dardi was later nominated by the President to the Rajya Sabha on the recommendation of Chief Minister Kairon. The only individual member to plead, that there had been discrimination against the Sikhs as such was Kartar Singh Chawla, an Advocate of the Punjab High Court, who appeared in his personal capacity, and submitted that he could establish the discrimination if he was given amnesty by the Commission for referring to some "secret circulars" and other "Government documents" in connection with the attitude of the Government. When Mr. Justice Chagla, one of the members of the Commission, asked him to convince the Commission first, that the denial of the Punjabi Suba constituted discrimination against the Sikh community, Chawla said that he could proceed only when he had the amnesty first, and that would be the only proper procedure. The request was not accepted.

The Hindu attitude was represented by Virender, editor of the "Pratap", a prominent Arya Samajist and Congressite, who appeared on behalf of the Hindi Raksha Samiti, and submitted that Punjabi was not the mother tongue of the Hindus, as Bengali and other languages were the mother tongues of their respective areas. According to him Punjabi was only a dialect and Gurmukhi a religious script, which was being sought to be imposed on the punjabi hindus. Another hindu leader, Mr. Balraj Madhok, M.P., later President of the Jan Sangh, put forward the Jan Sangh view point, stating that the Commission was not competent to go into the question of the Punjabi language, which pertained to the domain of experts. He also said that the Gurmukhi script was unsuited to Punjabi, and it was wrong to impose it on the people of the Punjab against their wishes. He attributed all the trouble and the tense situation in the State to the application of the Regional Formula, and demanded that "The Regional Committees set up in pursuance of that Formula be scrapped." Professor Sher Singh, the then President of Haryana Lok Samiti and later Congress Minister of State in the Union Government, also

participated in the proceedings pleading that there had been no discrimination against the sikhs, and that Punjabi was being inflicted on the people of Haryana against their wishes.

The Commission submitted its report on February 9, 1962, on the eve of the General Elections. The conclusions were expected. It traced the entire history of the Akali Dal demand back to 1946 of an 'Independent Sovereign State' but there was no definite area where the Sikhs could claim a big majority, therefore, a section of the Sikh community had been nursing a grudge. Regarding the demand made by the Nationalist Sikhs for the introduction of the Gurmukhi script in the whole of the Punjab in order to set off the Punjabi Suba demand, the Commission stated that it was not competent to go into this matter which fell within the purview of a language commission. Dealing with the contention of Master Tara Singh that non-formation of the Punjabi Suba was in itself an act of discrimination, the Report said, "The demand of Master Tara Singh was not based on the emphasis of the Punjabi language, but his argument in substance was that Hindus have got a State, the Muslims have got a State and therefore the Sikhs must have a State for themselves. This is a subject or a question which has not been referred to the Commission."

The Government resolution accepted the Report in toto, and notified its findings in Government Gazette on the above lines, thanking the Chairman and the members of the Commission for their labours and appreciating their services in that regard. The most unfortunate part of the findings of the Commission related to the remarks, where it is stated that Master Tara Singh's demand was mainly that the Sikhs must have a State, as the Muslims and Hindus had, after the partition of the country. These remarks were uncharitable and unjustified, since the Commission had no material on which to base a conclusion of this kind. The Commission should have been well aware, that a demand by the section of the Sikhs for an independent Sikh State before the partition of the country in the event of partition, was only to counter the Muslim League demand for the creation of Pakistan, and this

was on the active inspiration of the Congress leadership, which was using the Sikh leadership to fight its battle against the Muslim League. But the most regrettable aspect was that the Government of India, which included a Sikh, Swaran Singh should have accepted these findings, which were totally wrong, misconceived, partial, unjustified and based on no evidence.

The Punjab was in the midst of the third General Elections of the country in January and February, 1962. The Shiromani Akali Dal spearheaded the opposition by entering into electoral alliances with some of the like minded parties in the opposition, but its handicap was that it was fighting elections on the Punjabi Suba issue to which most of the Hindus were opposed. The Punjabi Suba demand by that time had come to be the demand by the Sikhs, by and large, and as such, the demand of one community. The approach of the Congress leadership in the selection of its candidates was to select those that could be depended upon to play an anti-Suba role, and it is for this reason that many of the erstwhile Akalis, who had joined the Congress in 1956 as a result of the merger of the Akali Dal in the Congress and had not toed anti-Sikh line, were deliberately not selected as candidates. This was certainly a breach of faith on the part of the Congress leadership to such individuals, but its approach had always been such. The entire Government machinery was set to move in support of the Congress candidates. The Congress party, no doubt, was able to capture 90 seats out of 154 in the Punjab, and Chief Minister Kairon was declared successful by a margin of 34 votes, but the way the announcement of his success was managed is illustrative of what was done elsewhere also. Harbans Singh Gujral, a prominent Advocate, and one of the counting agents for Mohan Singh Tur, the contesting candidate against Chief Minister Kairon, told the press after the declaration of the result, that the declaration had been made without confirming the figures of the counting agent, and according to his figures, Jathedar Mohan Singh was leading. The Chief Election Commissioner, Sunderam, who visited the place later was apprised of the situation, and it was reported from knowledgeable quarters, that he conveyed to the Prime Minister,

that a great abuse of democratic principles and election process had been made, which was not justified; but was told in reply by the Prime Minister, "I want Partap Singh to be the Chief Minister of the Punjab."

An analysis of the votes polled in the Punjabi Region showed that the Akali Dal candidates and others sponsored and supported by it secured 15,41,185 Sikh votes out of the 21,39,913 Sikh votes there. The Congress including the unattached individuals and independents of whom the number was quite large polled only 5,98,728 Sikhs votes. This showed that the Congress candidates and unattached independents were able to poll fewer than 30% of the Sikh votes. How far the results reflected the success of the basic policy of the Indian National Congress about national and emotional integration in the Sikhs, was for the Congress leadership to assess and gauge. The results, despite the use of the Government machinery, indicated that the Congress candidates did not secure even 1/3rd of the Sikh votes, though the Congress polled 43.12% of the overall votes in the Punjab. The Congress was able to form the Ministry with Partap Singh as Chief Minister and Gianu Kartar Singh as one of the cabinet Ministers, but Gian Singh Rarewala was excluded.

The Chief Minister Kairon embarked on a second term as Chief Minister with all the fanfare, and declared his determination that he would destroy 'communalism', meaning thereby the entity of the Akali Party and their demand for the Punjabi Suba. Speaking at the function of the annual reunion of ex-servicemen organised by the District Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Board, Jullunder, where he was presented with a sword, he said that he would wield that sword to weed out 'communalism' in the Punjab, adding, "The sword presented to me represents power and strength, and that I would definitely wield it to curb the enemies of peace, law and order."

The Akali Dal had been able to capture only 19 seats, but the group was united and solid and elected Gurnam Singh, as its leader and Lachhman Singh Gill as its Deputy Leader. The defeat of the Akali Dal at the poll, was due partly to disunity in the opposition, and to splinter groups in the Sikhs.

The mean tactics, and unscrupulous means adopted by the Congress caused disappointment to the Sikhs. The international situation had also become tense as China by that time had occupied a large tract of Indian territory and in collusion with Pakistan, both had mobilised their forces on the borders. Master Tara Singh, therefore, declared that it was not the time to renew the agitation for the Punjabi Suba, hence the demand was switched from the open field to the inside of the Chamber of the Assembly. Gurnam Singh in his maiden speech in the Vidhan Sabha in April 1962 during the budget session, traced the history of the Punjabi Suba struggle starting from the convention of 22nd May, 1960, followed by the arrest of the Akalis in the Punjab and the fast undertaken by Master Tara Singh in protest to what he described, "as a denial of fundamental rights to the protagonists of the Punjabi Suba". Gurnam Singh demanded a plebiscite on the issue of Punjabi Suba in the Punjabi Region if the wishes of the people were intended to be known and peace was desired to be established. He charged the Chief Minister with a Tara Singh obsession or a blue turban phobia. Giani Kartar Singh was commissioned to reply on behalf of the Government to the five-day debate and speaking on April 19, 1962, he urged the Akalis to give up the demand for Punjabi Suba.

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THE SHIROMANI AKALI DAL IN TURMOIL

XI

The breaking of his fast without the fulfilment of his pledge by Master Tara Singh very much affected his leadership. It was in early November, 1961, that a group led by Lachhman Singh Gill emerged, indicative of a rift in the Akali ranks, which became more obvious when four prominent Akalis, Lachhman Singh Gill, the then Vice-President of the S.G.P.C., Jathedar Jiwan Singh Umranangal, Jagjit Singh Gogiani, and Shiv Singh Jhawan, demanded that Master Tara Singh should not be elected President of the S.G.P.C. They claimed the support of other Akali workers including Mohan Singh Tur, Jagdev Singh, Gurcharan Singh, Sant Kirpal Singh and Bhag Singh Zaida. They justified their stand on the ground that Master Tara Singh had not stood by his pledge. To avoid this rift, five Piaras were appointed for the second time in 150 years of Sikh history to enquire into the alleged violation of the pledges both by Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh. After a detailed enquiry by the five Piaras (Beloved ones) both the Akali leaders were found guilty of having broken their pledges; and punishment was inflicted on them, to expiate their sins in the traditional Sikh way. The punishment imposed on Master Tara Singh was severer, because his guilt was considered more serious and graver.

The election of the Presidentship of the S.G.P.C. was held thereafter and Master Tara Singh was re-elected as President, but only 74 members out of 160 participated in the election

The rest conveyed their resentment by boycotting the election. The absentee dissidents led by Harcharan Singh Hudiara, described the election as an utter defiance of the verdict of the Five Piaras who had held him guilty. The split amongst the Sikhs had taken a serious turn, and this turmoil in Shiromani Akali Dal was to continue till Master Tara Singh's death. The rift in the rank and file could have been repaired and even cemented later, if Master Tara Singh had not repudiated or boycotted the High Power Commission outright, and had made the Akali Dal participate in its proceedings with all the emphasis on the aspect of discrimination, and made the proceedings a springboard for agitation throughout the country. The ill-advised non-cooperation without the announcement of any alternative programme of agitation, created a stalemate, setting the masses and the general public to criticising the capability of the then Sikh leadership to carry the community to its defined and decided objective. This gave an opportunity to the dissident group, simmering with dissatisfaction, to raise the banner of revolt against the leadership. Lachhman Singh Gill, a very astute, ambitious and unscrupulous politician, was in the fore-front, and had the tact and shrewdness to carry his point to its logical end. He inspired Jiwan Singh Umranangal to go on fast against the leadership on the stand that there had been a bogus recruitment of membership to maintain control over the organisation. This move was by-passed by the appointment of the five Piaras and adjudication on the guilt of the two Akali leaders. The rift was, however, temporarily avoided, which otherwise had gone deep due to the general frustration that had swept and seized the mass mind on account of the meagre success in the General Elections even on the Punjabi Suba issue. The time was ripe for a change of leadership, but Master Tara Singh was neither apprised of the situation, nor did he himself appreciate its gravity. Perhaps the failures that followed him were due to the strong opposition of Chief Minister Kairon, but there was no denying the fact that there were failures, despite the terrible suffering and sacrifices of the community. Master Tara Singh had been the leader of the Sikhs for nearly

40 years, he had steered their ship through all kinds of weather and water, through shoals and difficulties and had maintained his hold as undisputed leader, even amongst groups and factions professing conflicting ideologies. Doubtless, he had many a time been unsuccessful, and had had several reverses, and the Sikh ship had foundered many times, but he had remained in command as he kept Panthic identity, entity and unity in the fore-front; in his leadership alone lay the pre-eminent position of the Sikhs before the world. But this could not go on for all time, and circumstances then necessitated a change in leadership. It would have been much better if he had entrusted the guidance of the community to the collective leadership of some of his prominent followers, as he was advised by several of his friends, but he did not see the writing on the wall. Unfortunately, he had not even created a team of trusted lieutenants who would stand by him in his reverses. The merger in the Congress in 1956 had taken the cream of the leadership away from the Akali Dal, thus breaking a link. A new leadership had yet to come up. In such a situation, apprehending internal cracks in the party and a revolt from prominent followers, he committed another blunder by announcing the suspension of all activities and agitation, on the plea that there was tenseness in the international situation due to the aggression by the Chinese on the Northern frontier and by the Pakistanis on the Western frontier. This was certainly a patriotic step which was hardly appreciated by the Congress Leaders, but the Sikhs as a community, having suffered so long, expected some drive and move to attain their objective. This pronouncement gave the impression that the movement had been abandoned which further weakened Master Tara Singh's hold over the Sikhs. He was forced to contradict it, and speaking at Ludhiana on June 7, 1962, he reiterated that he had not abandoned the demand for Punjabi Suba, and said, "Punjabi Suba is our objective, our life and our religion. He who abandons this demand is dishonest. If any Akali leader abandons it, he will finish himself. It is not a demand of merely the Akali leaders or of the Akali Dal, but of the whole Sikh Panth." These words, though strong, cut no ice

at that time.

Chief Minister Kairon was bent upon taking measures to further weaken Master Tara Singh. He made such a pronouncement more than once after having been installed as Chief Minister. He even went to the extent of expressing his desire to merge Rajasthan with Punjab so as to form an economically viable and strong State on the Northern frontier of the country. Speaking on this subject to the pressmen, he went a step further, and announced that he would welcome the formation of a bigger State by merging Punjab with any or all the States of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Rajasthan.¹ Such an announcement was an indication that Chief Minister Kairon was bent upon his efforts to eliminate or weaken the Sikh entity and effectiveness with the help of communal Hindu elements. No doubt, he was responsible for the creation of the Punjabi University at Patiala. This was, however, only a sign to the vehement desire which was very deep in the masses. He had the Punjabi University inaugurated by the President Radha Krishnan and himself, in a speech lauded the role and the place of the Punjabi Language in the languages of the world, by saying, "Punjabi is the language of rebels and revolutionaries, which has kept aloof from pomp and show of royalty. It has never sounded the eulogies of aggressors, usurpers and pretenders. It is not recited before haughty Kings and mighty Monks, and never plays the part of dancing damsels in the courts of Maharajas and Nawabs. It sings the glory of cowherds and peasants with full-throated ease." Further applauding it, he said, "It has sung the songs of the spear, the sword and of arrows and also that of romantic love, of toils in deserts, jungles and wild waste-lands. It has sung hymns of the Gurus, saints and devotees of Punjab, and recited the chivalry and bravery of the Punjab warriors. It is a living expression of our patriotism and religious devotees." The sad irony of it was that the person who was so glorifying this language was the very one, who was instrumental in its suppression, and in that of all movements for its development during the critical period of preceding ten years.

The Akali Dal Working Committee meeting on July 8, 1962

gave an opportunity to the dissident group to announce the split. Master Tara Singh had taken exception to the activities of Lachhman Singh Gill and Jiwan Singh Umranganal earlier, and had a resolution moved in the meeting for their suspension, calling upon them further to explain their indiscipline and their disruptive activities. Sant Fateh Singh then pleaded for a reconciliation, but was not successful. These two prominent Akalis were expelled from the primary membership and all the positions that they held. At this, Sant Fateh Singh and Harcharan Singh Hudiara walked out and met the dissidents. Sant Fateh Singh then issued a statement protesting against this expulsion, and declared that he would place the matter before the Sikh Panth, for which he summoned a convention for July 22 in Gurdwara Mushkian, Mullanpur, District Ludhiana. He complained that he had requested the Working Committee to refrain from taking such a step in order to save the Panth from a rift but his suggestion had not been accepted. Therefore, he had felt disappointed and pained and left. Harcharan Singh Hudiara supported the version of Sant Fateh Singh, but this was contradicted by Master Tara Singh who, giving his own version in a press conference later, denied that Sant Fateh Singh had walked out in protest, but alleged that he had left to bring the resignation of two gentlemen and did not return. The rift thus was complete, and each group embarked on a canvassing mission amongst the masses for a show-down.

A convention under the Presidentship of Sant Fateh Singh was held on July 22, 1962, at Mullanpur wherein it was claimed that 78 members out of 155 members of the S.G.P.C. and 8 Akali legislators out of 19 were present. The convention passed two resolutions. The first resolution applauded the services and sacrifices of those who had suffered for the country and the community, particularly on the issue of Punjabi Suba, and stated further that the convention was profoundly concerned, "at the downward trend in the general morale of the Sikh community due to Master Tara Singh's failure to keep the solemn pledge for the attainment of Punjabi Suba, taken by him before the Akal Takhat Sahib. In order to retrieve the

Sikh Community from this unfortunate mishap, the convention unequivocally reiterates the demand for the formation of Punjabi Suba on a purely linguistic basis completely free from communal virus with the full cooperation and coordination of other communities residing in the area. To achieve this end, the convention strongly appeals to the Sikh community in particular, and other Punjabis in general, to rally round Sant Fateh Singh in this noble task, and respond to his call for this purpose, and to extend full and free cooperation to him for the achievement of the undertaking." In the other resolution, the convention appreciated the services rendered by Sant Fateh Singh to the Panth on several occasions, and expressed its complete confidence in his leadership and said, "In the present dark hour in the history of the Sikh nation, he, and he alone, is capable of steering clear the sinking canoe of Panthic unity, threatened by overwhelming forces and cross-currents from all directions, and after reposing full confidence in his leadership beseeches Sant Fateh Singh to take charge forthwith, in order to arrest the deteriorating situation, and lead the community to its destined goal consistent with Sikh traditions of sacrifices, and past glory."

Sant Fateh Singh in responding to these resolutions criticised Master Tara Singh in mild terms for his breaking the fast, stating that this had brought the community into disrepute. He agreed to take up the leadership and promised that he would do his best to attain the Punjabi Suba of his conception for which he would seek the cooperation of all. The decisions taken in this convention started struggle and strife between the two blocs of the Sikhs for supremacy in Sikh polity, which lasted for many years to come. The policy and programme of each bloc was governed with an eye on the other. In fact, Sikh politics thereafter revolved round the rivalry between the two leaderships, one that of Master Tara Singh which was fast losing ground because of the failures that dogged his track; and the other that of Sant Fateh Singh, who thereafter appeared to the Sikhs as a rising star on the horizon, who might be able to take them to their goal.

There was no doubt that each group was led by prominent

leaders who had stood by and suffered for the cause they had espoused ; and had come into prominence on account of their sincerity of motive and honesty of purpose. There was no selfishness in the creation of separate blocs amongst the leaders and the workers, for each bloc or group was motivated by a keen desire to benefit the community and attain the Punjabi Suba. The prominent Akali supporters of Sant Fateh Singh honestly and genuinely felt that Master Tara Singh had failed them by not giving proper lead at a crucial time and that though, he was able to take the community to the highest pitch of fervour, he failed whenever the question of settlement came in. They also felt that Sant Fateh Singh had given correct turn to Akali Dal policies by laying more emphasis on the linguistic aspect of the issue, thus countering the charges of communalism levelled by the opposition. Those who remained with Master Tara Singh and followed his lead also had the conviction and the faith, that Master Tara Singh alone could lead the Sikh community in spite of his previous failures, which were the results of the calculated plans made, and that Master Tara Singh, being an all India personality, had more contacts and better friends, who supported the objective which the Sikhs had. These genuine convictions of the two blocs having the same ideology were to be the bane of the community for the next six years. There was, however, no avoiding them for Master Tara Singh was advised to remain at the helm despite adverse circumstances. But the most prominent part in the situation was played by a section of Hindus and their Press, that always had been keen and desirous that the Sikhs should remain divided. This section and their press started giving wide publicity to the policies and programmes of Sant Fateh Singh and to building up his personality and raising his image. It was not with the objective of building up the Sikh leadership, but to build Sant Fateh Singh in order to break Master Tara Singh. This support to Sant Fateh Singh from unexpected quarters was a godsend, because the vacuum created in Sikh leadership due to the downfall of Master Tara Singh, was being quickly filled by the personality of Sant Fateh Singh, and the Sikhs as a community were not being left leaderless.

Sant Fateh Singh declared his policy and his programme at Delhi on 1st August, 1962, at a press conference, wherein he said that he had had fundamental differences with Master Tara Singh over the concept and nature of the Suba from the very beginning, and that he had felt that Master Tara Singh at times was guided by the percentage and effectiveness of the Sikhs in such an area, but he considered that the question was purely linguistic and must be treated as such. He added, that he had all along expressed his conviction that there could be no Punjabi Suba at the cost of Hindu-Sikh unity, and that such a Suba would not be of much benefit without the non-Sikhs.

This declaration was very clever and timely, and increased the support of the Hindu press, which otherwise was very critical of Master Tara Singh's policies. This declaration by Sant Fateh Singh evoked strong criticism by Master Tara Singh who, at a press conference at Delhi on August 3, 1962, expressed his amazement at Sant Fateh Singh's declaration which, according to him, conceded veto to the Hindus in the formation of the Punjabi Suba. He said, "The formation of Punjabi Suba involves only the implementation of a national accepted principle applied to the rest of India, but not to the Punjabi-speaking areas because the Sikhs may thereby secure a slight majority in the proposed State." These statements of the two Akali leaders making a different approach to the issue tilted the support of Hindu press and Hindu section on Sant Fateh Singh's side. Sant Fateh Singh, however, did try to clarify his stand while addressing a conference at Sirhali in the 2nd week of August 1962, stating that the Punjabi Suba should be formed on the basis of language alone, but denied that he would give up the demand if he did not have the support of the Hindus. He said that the cooperation of the Hindus and the Harijans must be sought to achieve that end. The approach to the Punjabi Suba issue by both these leaders was further clarified when they met the Committee on National Integration set up by the National Integration Council. Master Tara Singh was understood to have defended the Akali Dal's demand for Punjabi Suba on

the plea that while the linguistic principle had been applied to the reorganisation of other States in the country, Punjab was excluded which amounted to discrimination and a lack of trust in the Sikhs. Sant Fateh Singh, however, met the Committee separately, and expressed his belief that the Hindus and Sikhs were the limbs of the same body, and mis-understanding amongst them should be and could be removed if Punjab Suba was conceded and both were made to trust each other.

The two blocs formed in the Akali Dal started making preparations for a show-down on August 18, when a meeting of the General Body of the Akali Dal had been called. Lachman Singh Gill, the then a very prominent dissident, announced that they would be holding the meeting of the General Body in Guru Ram Das Sarai under the Presidentship of Sant Fateh Singh, who had been elected President of the convention held earlier at Gurdwara Mashkian on July 22, 1962. This move of Sant Fateh Singh's group provoked Kirpal Singh Chakshrewala, the then President of the S.G.P.C., to announce that he would not allow this group to hold a separate meeting within the precincts of Sri Darbar Sahib. He sought the help of the police by a letter to stop this. This was a wrong step, and this switched public sympathy even more to Sant Fateh Singh's group. The police found an excuse to arrest Sant Fateh Singh and ten others, and arrested other twelve persons including Master Tara Singh, from his group also, on the charge of apprehension of a breach of peace. The police entered Guru Ram Das Sarai, which created a resentment among the public against Master Tara Singh. The parties were released on bail. Both the groups held their meetings separately as scheduled, purporting to be of the members of the General Body of each group. It was claimed by Sant Fateh Singh's group that their meeting held before the Akal Takhat had an attendance of 200 delegates besides 72 circle Jathedars and 9 members of the Vidhan Sabha. The meeting elected Sant Fateh Singh President for the ensuing year. Master Tara Singh's group claimed that they held their meeting near Darshani Deori (the office of the Akali Dal being in the possession of the police) and had an attend-

ance of 230 delegates, who had passed a vote of confidence in the Chairman, Master Tara Singh. Gurnam Singh and some members of the Vidhan Sabha also attended this meeting.

The two separate meetings of the rival groups, and the so-called election of each President, deepened the rift, with no further chance of unity. The separate meeting held by Sant Fateh Singh's group decided on a motion of no-confidence in Master Tara Singh's nominee by 15 members of the S.G.P.C. who demanded a special meeting of the S.G.P.C. for the purpose. Kirpal Singh Chaksherewala, in a statement to the press said that the requisition suffered from legal infirmities and as such could be thrown out, but he accepted the challenge and fixed October 2, 1962, for a discussion of the motion of no-confidence. With this announcement, the struggle between the two groups spread throughout the Punjab, each group starting on a canvassing tour to win over the members of the S.G.P.C. to their side. Chief Minister Kairon threw his weight on the side of Sant Fateh Singh. A deputation of the S.G.P.C. and the Shiromani Akali Dal (Master Tara Singh's group) met the Governor on 18th September complaining of interference by the Government machinery in their internal affairs. The deputation further said that the Chief Minister ordered the arrested of Master Tara Singh on the 19th August for this very reason.

The no-confidence motion became the test of leadership amongst the Sikhs, and it soon became apparent that this would have a great impact on the public mind and decide who would be supreme among the Sikhs thereafter. The Hindu section of the press became more vocal in favour of Sant Fateh Singh who was able to take full advantage of the situation, channelise and consolidate the forces that were arrayed against Master Tara Singh. The no-confidence motion was carried by 76 votes to 72, thus ending for all time the leadership of Master Tara Singh in the community. It has been said earlier that the S.G.P.C., a statutory body under the Gurdwara Act, has always played a distinct and definite role, both in Sikh politics and in Punjab politics. This body had been used as a spring-

board by organisations and individuals for advancement in the political life of the State. This organisation has huge resources and a large staff to take an effective part in the election. In fact, the party in control of the S.G.P.C. has been recognised to be the party steering Sikh politics. The emergence of Sant Fateh Singh's group in control of S.G.P.C. set the seal to his leadership, and thereafter this party played the main role. No doubt Master Tara Singh said to the pressmen after the defeat of his nominee, that he was not discouraged by the reverses which, according to him, were caused by the Government interference, and that he was still determined to preserve the unity of the Panth under his leadership, but the vote in the S.G.P.C. was considered vote for the community leadership in the Sikhs.

The success of Sant Fateh Singh, astonishing and tremendous, gave him hold over the Sikh Community in the Punjab, though for the time being, because the Sikhs outside had long and old affiliation, with Master Tara Singh's group, and it would take many years to extend his influence outside Punjab. This was illustrated when, immediately after the success of Sant Fateh Singh's nominee, the Delhi Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, the second biggest organisation of the Sikhs, with a very large budget, in a resolution resolved, "Thus keeping in view the fact, that during the past ten years, the connection with S.G.P.C., Amritsar, had invariably involved the Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Delhi, in the politics of Punjab and led to trouble, therefore, the Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Delhi, announce their severance of all connections with the S.G.P.C., Amritsar."

Sant Fateh Singh had been, of course, emphasising the objective of Punjabi Suba in all his speeches and statements with more stress on the linguistic aspect thereof, yet his success in the S.G.P.C. gave an impression to the communal minded Hindus that the demand for Punjabi Suba had receded into the background, and needed only a decent burial. This encouraged the Working Committee of the Punjab and Himachal Pradesh Jan Sangh to demand, in their resolution on October 9, 1962, of the Government to completely scrap

the Regional Formula. This evoked a strong protest from Sant Fateh Singh who, in a statement to the press, reiterated his stand on the Punjabi Suba issue, and announced that he would struggle for its attainment in the same manner as he had done before and during the Punjabi Suba morcha. He said, he adhered to it as honestly as before except that he wanted the formation of a Punjabi Suba on a purely linguistic basis and, for the purpose, he would do his best to enlist the necessary cooperation of all Punjabis alike. Master Tara Singh, finding that he was losing ground because of the opposition to his person, had the election of his group held again on November 4, 1962, wherein Jathedar Achhar Singh, once head Priest of Akal Takhat, was elected President.

Moreover, the internal situation in the country totally changed because of the border conflict with the Chinese forces, which had attacked the country on October 22, 1962, and occupied a very large area. It was indeed painful to India to see how its defences collapsed before the invading army, despite all preparations for, and expectation of, such an eventuality. With this defeat and dishonour, such a wave of patriotism and enthusiasm swept over the country as was unheard of for a long time in its history, bringing in unity in diverse elements to meet the danger that loomed large on the Northern Frontiers. These defensive preparations and measures were more apparent and intense in Punjab. The Sikhs went the whole hog in support of defence preparations. Master Tara Singh announced at Amritsar that the Akali Dal's demand for a Punjabi Suba had been suspended in view of the national emergency, and expressed his determination that the Akali Dal would give priority to the defence of the country. Sant Fateh Singh constituted a separate Defence Council to mobilise the Sikh community for defence efforts, and toured the entire State to raise the morale of the people in order to accelerate recruitment and prepare for all exigencies. The Working Committee of the Sant Akali Dal, (as this group of the Akali Dal came to be known thereafter) declared on December 23, 1962, that the demand for Punjabi Suba could not be pressed in view of the national emergency created by the Chinese invasion.

The spontaneous and solid response by the Sikhs at this moment of emergency was an abundant proof, if proof was ever needed, of the patriotism and devotion of the Sikh community, refuting all the charges made by the communal sections of the Hindus that the Sikhs were sectarian. Both the groups of the Akali Dal in one huge gathering of leaders of Sikh Public Organisations, political parties and others, convened at the Moti Bagh Palace on December 24, 1962, elected Maharaja Yadvindra Singh of Patiala as Maha Jathedar of the Sikh people. He was given a mandate to assess and organise the total resources of the Sikhs for the purpose of their employment and use for the defence of the country and the glory of the nation. He was also requested to set up suitable organs and to devise ways and means for effective realisation of the supreme objective. This meeting had been attended by Master Tara Singh, Sant Fateh Singh, Jathedar Udham Singh Nagoke and several prominent Sikh leaders and public men.

Punjab contributed more than Rs. 2 crores to the national defence fund, and made a present of gold, double the weight of Nehru, as its further contribution. Sant Fateh Singh met the Prime Minister on February 7, 1963, and presented a cheque for Rs. 50,000 on behalf of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee as its contribution to the National Defence Fund. Speaking at a conference on February 16, 1963, calling to accelerate war efforts, Sant Fateh Singh said, "Our immediate objective is to drive out the Chinese. The movement for the formation of Punjab Suba has been slowed down as it is a domestic problem. This demand will not be pressed during the emergency. We will again take up the issue after the Chinese are driven out."

The situation in the country and the patriotism exhibited by the Punjabis, however, encouraged the Working Committee of the Punjab and Himachal Pradesh Jan Sangh to even suggest the abolition of State Legislature and substitute unitary form of Government at the centre in its meeting held at Chandigarh on March 11, 1963. How unfortunate, that these communal sections did not appreciate that the Sikhs and other minorities had joined the national stream of the country because of their

love for their motherland. It was tragic that such sections should demand a set up wherein minorities were sought to be eliminated and extinguished. These communal elements were always hostile to the minorities in their policies however, patriotic the minorities might be in a national emergency or otherwise.

Both the blocs of the Akali Dal were anxiously and keenly contributing their best to the defence of the country, but even in such a situation, the State Congress leadership was trying to lure the Akali legislators to the Congress fold by all kinds of promises. Two Akali legislators, Lakhi Singh and Dalip Singh, were made to defect to the Congress Party having been promised certain positions of vantage. Their defection led to the announcement by the three Akali leaders, Harcharan Singh Hudiara, Jivan Singh Umranangal and Tirlochan Singh, that they would go on hunger strike at the houses of these two defecting members at Chandigarh. This led to the arrest of these three Akali leaders. This caused great disappointment to Sant Fateh Singh who had made all efforts to serve the country. It was in such circumstances that he suddenly disappeared on April 24, 1963, leaving a note written in Gurmukhi in his room, saying that he considered the arrest of these Akali leaders an encroachment on their right to persuade the M.L.As., who had defected to the Congress to return to the Akali Dal. He further said in his note that he wanted to avoid a clash with the Government during the emergency, but the Government was anxious to crush the opposition taking advantage of the emergency. He conveyed that he was going into exile to seek inner light. He emerged after 47 days and was reported to have spent the period in meditation and prayer in a jungle, a mile from the historic village, Guru Ka Lahore in Bilaspur district. Sant Fateh Singh was able to consolidate his position more among the Sikhs by June 18, 1963, when the General Body of the S.G.P.C. rejected the vote of no-confidence moved by Master Tara Singh group by 81 votes to 62, thus increasing the strength and hold of Sant Akali Dal on the Sikhs. This was taken as a vote of confidence for Sant Fateh Singh's leadership. It was a split, however, which had

weakened the forces in support of the Punjabi Suba movement, as both the groups of the Akali Dal were concentrating more on maintaining and consolidating their position among the Sikh masses, and their struggle was to capture or retain their hold on the S.G.P.C. Consequently, all other activities had to be suspended.

Chief Minister Kairon, however, had found in the emergency an excuse to strengthen his personal hold, and hit out at the opposition. He had not taken Gian Singh Rarewala in his cabinet after the 1962 General Elections, and dropped Giani Kartar Singh when he reduced the strength of the cabinet on the plea of emergency. He embarked on a well-thought out scheme to concentrate all power in his own hand. He created a new Auxiliary force known as the Home Guard, entirely manned by his personal friends and followers, on the plea that it was needed for civil defence. He also started collaboration with American firms to have an air rifle factory in Punjab, which could produce Army rifles and other armaments also. In fact, these steps were being taken to seize power if and when such an occasion arose, as the conditions in the country were very fluid, and nobody could say where future lay, particularly when the defences had collapsed before the Chinese aggression. These steps on the part of Chief Minister Kairon were looked at with suspicion by some members of the Congress High Command. They doubted his motive and this weakened his hold in the Centre.

This encouraged some members of the Legislative Assembly party including Hardwari Lal, Gurdial Singh Dhillon, Virinder, Mehar Chand Ahuja, Comrade Ram Chander, to declare themselves a separate group and to start open criticism of the State Congress leadership. This group submitted a comprehensive charge-sheet against Chief Minister Kairon to the President of the Congress on August 29, 1963. This was handed by a deputation comprising Gian Singh Rarewala, Gurdial Singh Dhillon and Chaudary Hardwari Lal. Gian Singh Rarewala giving a statement to the press said, "Naked use of police force at certain places shows that the ruling group with unlimited resources and authority at its

disposal was determined to capture the organisation at any cost." He further declared that the most distressing feature of the Punjab situation then was, the intolerant attitude of Kairon and some of his lieutenants towards their critics. Unless they were made to give up this attitude, there could be no peace in the Punjab Congress and no democracy in the State. He further added, "Already the parliamentary structure and the administration has suffered a severe setback. Therefore, the destruction of democracy will be complete unless the ruling party is immediately checked."

Earlier a deputation of the joint opposition except Sant Akali Dal legislators had given a memorial to the President Radhakrishnan, enumerating 32 charges of corruption, nepotism and favouritism against the Chief Minister. For some time, it had become known all over the State, that the sons of the Chief Minister had amassed tremendous wealth, and had exhibited it by constructing cinema houses, cold storages and other industrial establishments in different parts of the State. This sudden wealth in the hands of the two sons of the Chief Minister had attracted the attention of the persons, who were otherwise impartial and neutral, but who could not permit this open scandal in the public life of the State. President Radhakrishnan was reported to have taken up the matter and advised the Prime Minister to hold an enquiry into the charges against Kairon. The Prime Minister accordingly said that he was examining the charges that had been brought by the non-communist opposition against Chief Minister Kairon. He, of course, added that he attached no importance to the strictures on the Chief Minister passed by the Supreme Court attributing malafides on the recall of Dr. Partap Singh, a Civil Surgeon, who had retired and was required to face an enquiry on recall. The Prime Minister said that Chief Minister Kairon was personally not a party to such proceedings, and as such could not be held responsible for such remarks. This statement of the Prime Minister had been made on the 29th August, 1963, whereafter public opinion became more vocal in pressing the demand for an open enquiry into the charges against the Chief Minister

The long-awaited announcement came on October 22, 1963, when it was stated that the Prime Minister had recommended to the President to have an enquiry made by some high authority into the charges levelled against the Chief Minister in the memorandum presented by non-communist opposition leaders led by Master Tara Singh including Ch Devi Lal, Abdul Ghani Dhar, Jagat Narain, and others, wherein a demand had been made for public enquiry for the reason, "that being highly aggrieved by the misdeeds and blatant acts of corruption and misuse of power by the present Chief Minister, Partap Singh Kairon, and being further aggrieved by the partisan handling of the complaints based on documentary proof against Partap Singh Kairon," a public enquiry was called for. It was further stated that Chief Minister Kairon would not resign during the course of the enquiry, and justification was given by Nehru in a statement, "Any change in the leadership of Punjab might well result in producing confusion and putting a stop to the progress that Punjab is making, and encouraging fissiparous and communal activities to gain more prominence. Mr. Partap Singh Kairon has been largely identified with this progress in many directions, and more especially with steps to meet the emergency. He is a very popular figure in Punjab in both civil and military circles, and to remove him would greatly disrupt the conditions in Punjab as a whole."

S. R. Dass, a retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, was appointed as a one-man Commission to enquire into the charges under the Commission of Enquiry Act, 1952, who invited information of the public on December 5, 1963, in regard to the charges which were the subject of the enquiry. The opposition started collecting material to pursue the proceedings. The dissidents in the Congress also became more active. The announcement of the Commission of enquiry swelled their number and they demanded that three-man probe committee of the Congress Working Committee should hold an enquiry into the charges which they had levelled. In a joint letter to the Prime Minister they said, "You have acquitted Mr. Kairon even before the commencement of the trial. Then you have decided to limit the enquiry to the charge-sheet by

the opposition and have completely ignored the charges levelled by men of Mr. Kairon's own party and by Mr. Ram Piara, M.L.A. In graveness, some of these charges exceed the charges levelled by the opposition, and it is more depressing that our charge-sheet has either been thrown into the waste-paper basket or consigned to shelves groaning under the weight of earlier charge-sheet against Mr. Kairon." The letter further said that Kairon staying on as Chief Minister during the enquiry would not be conducive to a fair enquiry as he would be able to tamper with official files, and cause them to appear untraceable, and thus frustrate the process; "If you seriously believe that a fair enquiry will be possible with Mr. Kairon as Chief Minister, you do not know his limitless capacity to create or destroy evidence according to the need." These dissident members of the Congress Legislature party resigned on the refusal of the Prime Minister to suspend him.

The appointment of the Dass Commission, and the proceedings therein made the condition in Punjab very fluid and unstable. The Congress Party already had split up, and a substantial dissident group constituted 'The Prajatanter Party' on December 22, 1963, as distinct entity without merging into the opposition. The party, however, did not last long, and when the findings of the Dass Commission went against Chief Minister Kairon, one of the prominent members of the party soon declared his return to the Congress in a statement to the press wherein he said, "Now that the Dass Commission Report has been submitted to the Governor and there is wide-spread impression that the findings have gone against the Chief Minister, S. Partap Singh Kairon, our stand has been vindicated," adding "that the party will meet soon to decide to join our old beloved Congress organisation."

The cleavage between the two groups of the Akalis, however, had become wider and deeper without any possibility of unity or merger despite efforts made by Gurnam Singh, who was keen to maintain his position as a leader of both the groups in the legislature. Giani Bhupinder Singh, once a Granthi and later a paid employee of the S.G.P.C., had become the President of the Akali Dal of Master Tara Singh's group

on January 22, 1964, on the resignation of Jathedar Achhar Singh, who was reported to have taken a stand for the unity of the two groups. Sant Fateh Singh in a statement on January 24, 1964, accused Master Tara Singh of sabotaging the unity efforts when he had even agreed to the arbitration of Jathedar Achhar Singh and Mohan Singh Tur. The split in the Akali Dal had disrupted Sikh unity to such an extent that both the groups sponsored their candidates for the Patti seat bye-election in March 1964 which ultimately went to the Congress. Master Tara Singh's nominee, however, polled only 2745 votes as against 22442 votes polled by the Congress candidate and 18747 votes polled by the Sant Akali Dal candidate. This was another index of the waning leadership of Master Tara Singh. This was followed by the defeat of his nominee in the General Body of S.G.P.C in June 1964 in the Presidential election by a margin of 26 votes. There was, however, one occasion when the leaders of both the groups gave a joint call to the Sikhs to prepare for every sacrifice to restore the sanctity of *Ponta Sahib Gurdwara in Himachal Pradesh*, wherein the police had resorted to firing on the Nihang Sikhs in occupation. Several Nihangs were alleged to have been killed, and even the Granthi reciting the Granth Sahib was shot dead and sacrilege committed even on *Guru Granth Sahib*. Sant Fateh Singh then declared that he would resort to some serious measure to vindicate the honour and sanctity of the Gurdwara, but the crisis was averted when the Himachal Government appointed a sitting Judge of Allahabad High Court to hold a probe into the allegation of police excesses. The findings of the Commission, however, went against the Sikhs. There had been different versions why the Commission reported against the obvious fact of sacrilege. Thereafter the complaint of the Sikhs had been that *the functioning of the Judicial Tribunals even had not been above board.*

Partap Singh Kairon resigned on June 14, 1964, and the Dass Commission Report was published on June 21, 1964, which held the Chief Minister guilty of having connived at the doings of his sons and relatives, his colleagues and Government officials." The Report further stated that Punjab Chief

Minister "knew or had ample reason to think or suspect that his sons and relatives were allegedly exploiting his influence and power. He cannot now plead ignorance of it" and "his conduct was unbecoming and reprehensible." Each of the thirty-two charges was enquired into, and he was found guilty of four charges. He was also found guilty of abuse of his influence and power for his benefit in a case which came to be known as Dr. Dhillon's case, whose services he retained for six weeks against the rules.

The exit of Partap Singh Kairon from the political sphere of the State was a major event in Punjab politics, for he had ruled the State for 8 years, fighting all the while against the Sikhs and their objectives. He was the one man who had not given way or surrendered despite the tremendous sacrifices which the Sikhs had made for the attainment of Punjabi Suba. What reasons motivated him is any body's guess, and would be the subject for a future historian to probe. Was it with the motive to seek the support of the Centre for personal power that he made the suppression of the Sikhs a means to that end, or did he genuinely feel that the partition of the Punjab would not ultimately be in the interest of the Sikhs? There was no doubt that he was a man with drive and dynamism and was not daunted by difficulties. He was a man of extreme views and tolerated no differences. When he became the supporter of the 'secularism' of Nehru, he spared no efforts to eliminate the Sikh ideology and their sense of separate entity. He was a man of the masses with extreme likes and dislikes, and ruled the State with a strong hand. He was extremely ambitious, which became more obvious when he took measures to concentrate power in his own hands during the emergency. It was then that he began to be suspected by the Central leadership in the Congress of creating a private army for personal power, if and when the situation called for it due to the Chinese invasion. Nehru, however, still remained his admirer. But the hand of destiny took Nehru away on May 27, 1964, leaving Partap Singh Kairon without his main support. It was said, at that time by a high up that had Nehru been alive, the findings of the Report of the Dass Commission would have been

different.

The resignation of Partap Singh Kairon left a vacuum in the politics of the Punjab which could be hardly filled by any successor from the Congress. Dr. Bhargava was appointed Head of the Caretaker Government pending the selection or election of a leader by the Congress Legislative Party. The Congress Parliamentary Board in its meeting on June 16, 1964, authorised the Congress President and the Prime Minister to finalise the election of the leader in a manner, they thought best. Swaran Singh was assigned the duty to make spot assessment of the situation and consult individual assembly members in this regard. He had a round of talks with the members, and it was resolved in the meeting of the legislators held on June 30, 1964, that the High Command nominee would be accepted as a leader. The selection of Ram Kishan, a non-entity, who had never played a prominent role in the politics of the State, was due to the fact, that he was acceptable to Partap Singh Kairon, who had still his group which counted. He felt that Ram Kishan would not be detrimental to his interests nor could he be a critic of his previous administration. Ram Kishan was equally acceptable to Swaran Singh. His selection, however, came as a surprise to the Sikhs for he belonged to the Arya Samaj section of the Hindus and a few months' administration showed that his approach was anti-Sikh.

Both the groups in the Sikhs had been striving for supremacy over each other, and the movement regarding the Punjab Suba had been put into the cold storage, except for occasional slogans whenever there was a conference or a gathering of either group. Sant Fateh Singh meanwhile was meeting members of the Congress High Command from time to time, to impress upon them the futility of opposition, and he unfolded his mind in a statement to the press on September 9, 1964, when he said that during his meeting with the leaders he had assured them that the Punjab would remain part and parcel of India.

An Akali Conference was held on September 20, 1964, under the auspices of the Sant Akali Dal at a village 10 miles

from Faridkot, where speeches were made criticising Ram Kishan's administration which gave a spurt to the Punjabi Suba movement. The S.G.P.C. election was scheduled for January 1965, hence, thereafter the struggle of both the groups was with an eye to these elections. The situation had become tense due to the rivalries in the leadership of the two groups. Therefore, some well-meaning persons held a Panthic Conference at Patiala on November 19, 1964, under the Presidentship of Sant Gurmukh Singh with a view to evolving some measures to bring in Panthic unity in order to avoid the warfare that was imminent in the General Elections to the S.G.P.C. The Conference was well-attended by prominent Sikhs, and a negotiation committee was appointed with Gian Singh Rarewala as convener to bring both the groups together. The other members of the committee were Sant Gurmukh Singh, Jathedar Udham Singh, Teja Singh and I. Jathedar Udham Singh being ill in those days, and Sant Gurmukh Singh being a man of piety and religion, the burden fell on Gian Singh and me to go about to meet the leaders of both the groups to find some formula for unity. All this while we found that Sant Fateh Singh was sure of the success of his group in the elections, but he was, however, agreeable to any reasonable proposition for unity even to the extent of having a fresh recruitment of the Akali Dal General Body, which would elect a new executive and a leader. Master Tara Singh's group, however, was insistent that the original Akali Dal from which Sant Fateh Singh had defected must be recognised, and thereafter recruitment done. Sant Fateh Singh would not agree to it. The negotiations broke down.

The elections were held. There was a hard contest for each seat. The results were announced on January 18, 1965. Sant Fateh Singh's group secured 90 seats, against 45 captured by Master Tara Singh's group, with two independents thus giving leadership and supremacy to Sant Fateh Singh. Sant Fateh Singh, in a statement to the press, attributed this victory to the mission that he had undertaken of service to the Panth and of maintenance of sanctity of the Gurdwaras. Significantly enough, the Punjabi Suba issue was not mentioned. Master Tara Singh

retired to a village named Salogra in Himachal Pradesh for six months, without giving any statement. Thus the field was left open for Sant Fateh Singh to make his next move towards the attainment of Punjabi Suba. A big Panthic Convention was held on April 29, 1965, which was attended by 500 representatives of different Sikh organisations but the main resolution of the convention dealt with the incidents of sacrilege committed by the non-Sikhs at Ludhiana, Doraha and other places. These matters were indeed important and were made the subject of extreme grievance by the Sikhs, but there was no move to take steps to start a struggle for Punjabi Suba.

No doubt, the issue of Punjabi Suba was being kept alive by occasional conferences in which the demand was reiterated, but continued inactivity and no overt move were causing frustration to the Sikhs, and the feeling was permeating the masses that the Akali leadership was failing them. This atmosphere encouraged Master Tara Singh's group to give a new slogan and a new ideology to remove this frustration. It was in these circumstances that a conference was held in May 1965, at Ludhiana in the name of the distinguished Sikh soldier, General Hari Singh Nalua, where the following resolution was moved by Gurnam Singh, retired Judge of the High Court, and then the leader of the opposition in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha, which was seconded by Giani Bhupinder Singh, the then President of the Master Akali Dal.

"This conference in commemoration of Hari Singh Nalua of historic fame reminds all concerned that the Sikh people are makers of history and are conscious of their political destiny in a free India.

"This conference recalls that the Sikh people agreed to merge into common Indian nationality on the explicit understanding of being accorded the constitutional status of co-sharers in the Indian sovereignty alongwith the majority community, which solemn understanding now stands totally repudiated by the present Rulers of India. Further, the Sikhs have been systematically reduced to sub-political status in their homeland, and to an insignificant position in their motherland, India. The Sikhs are in a position to establish before an international

demand by saying "What will happen to the Sikhs living in other parts of India if such a homeland is created for them"² The worthy President of the Indian National Congress forgot that 5 crores of Muslims were still living in India after the creation of a sovereign Pakistan State, and the Sikhs were spread out not only over the rest of India, but also in different parts of the world. It is this mentality of the Hindu leadership at the highest level, which induces the minorities of India, including the Sikhs to think seriously of their future when they are threatened that even a demand for a Homeland could instil into the minds of the Hindus the thought of their expulsion from the rest of the country.

Master Tara Singh returned from Salogra after six months' self-imposed exile on July 24, 1965, and announced his re-entry into politics with the declaration that unless the Congress was ousted from power, neither the country nor religion was safe. He asserted that the Congress was ill-treating the minorities, had suppressed and victimised the Kashmiri Muslims in Kashmir, the Christians in Nagaland and the Sikhs in the Punjab. He attributed the refusal of the Congress leadership to create a linguistic State for the Punjabis to their suspicion about the loyalty of the Sikhs, whom they thought to be pro-Pakistani, if such a Suba was created. He claimed that the Sikhs were not willing to live in this shadow of suspicion, which gave them an inferiority complex and demanded that the Sikhs should be given the right to determine their political status in the Suba of their creation. He read out a statement which was in fact a thesis for the future guidance of the Sikhs, on August 2, 1965, at a press conference at Delhi, which was obviously a result of considerable deliberations and thought by Master Tara Singh, who it could not be denied, had ample experience and knowledge of the policies of the Hindu leadership in India. His thesis was as under :

"1. After quiet contemplation during my rest at Salogra, I have come to certain conclusions which I wish to share with my fellow-Sikhs as well as political workers of other communities.

2. When India achieved independence in August, 1947

the Sikhs had been justly recognised and accepted as legitimate inheritors of the sovereignty of India, along with Hindus and Muslims. When the country was partitioned, the Sikhs accepted solemn assurances of the Hindu leaders saying that they would be accorded a free political status in a free India through a Constitution with their acceptance. As power passed into the hands of the majority community, these solemn promises were forgotten and cynically repudiated.

3. The resurgence of militant Hinduism has since 1947 completely taken control of the scene in free India. An emphasis on ramming Sanskritised Hindi down the unwilling throats of non-Hindi-speaking people, insistence on the performance of Hindu rituals at State functions to the complete exclusion of Muslim, Christian and Sikh ceremonies, and an aggressive attitude towards minority communities, has become the order of the day. The communal riots at Jabalpur, Aligarh, Jamshedpur and Calcutta, coupled with persistent and planned desecration of Sikh places of worship, have been organised by communalist thugs. Christian missionaries and institutions have been run down, while proselytising activities of the Hindus have been encouraged by the State. Much of the discontent in the Hill areas of Assam and Nagaland is traceable to the unfair treatment of Christians. In Kashmir, continuous attempts have been made to stifle the true aspirations of the Kashmiris, and recently Sheikh Abdullah has been put in detention refusing him the elementary right of explaining himself. It is clear that the minorities in India, in particular the Muslims, the Christians and the Sikhs, stand in great jeopardy.

4. The threat which this situation poses assumes most alarming proportions in the case of the Sikhs, for they have their cultural roots and social integration with the Hindus. Precisely on this account, there has been an open conspiracy during the last 18 years to suppress and absorb the Sikhs into the inchoate mass of Hindus.

5. The Sikh people are makers of history, and the community's identity cannot be wiped out in the name of National unity, either under the orders of political leaders or, indirectly, through the policies adopted by the Congress. What

God and history has built cannot, and shall not, be permitted to be destroyed by these new Rulers of India.

6. It is in this background that the tacit consensus of Sikh attitudes and opinions has found a spontaneous echo in the resolution recently adopted at a Sikh conference at Ludhiana, wherein a demand has been made for an international and independent Tribunal before whom the Sikhs can prove their fore-mentioned case, and wherein the political goal of the Sikhs has been laid down as self-determined political status within the Union of India. I endorse this resolution in its entirety.

7. The friction between India and Pakistan has assumed sinister proportions now, and the Sikhs feel peculiarly concerned about this matter. It is the considered opinion of the Sikh people that the persistence of tensions between Pakistan and India is extremely detrimental to the overall interests of this sub-continent, and it is specially harmful to the welfare of the Sikh people. The Sikhs earnestly desire a lasting and genuine friendship between Pakistan and India and, at all events, the Sikhs are clear in their minds that feelings of friendliness between the Sikh people and the people of West Pakistan should be nourished and strengthened, so that the Sikhs can have a free and open intercourse with, and access to their holy land, the land of the epiphany of their religion. *Towards this end, the Sikh people shall continue to strive*

8. The Sikhs demand a space in the sun of free India, wherein they can breathe the air of freedom. In the traditions of Sikhism, and in the teachings of their Gurus, there is no room for inter-communal strife or inter-communal discrimination, and whenever and wherever, therefore, the Sikhs acquire decision-making powers they shall always remain animated with these traditions and the great teachings of their Gurus.

9. Concerning the economic activities and programmes, the Sikh people are clear in their minds that the spirit of their religion and their historical traditions militate against the concentrating of wealth in individual hands and abuse of the means of production by private agencies. Simultaneously, the Sikhs are passionately devoted to the cause of the preservation

and protection of the autonomy of the individual.

10. These are the broad conclusions at which I have arrived, and these are the broad indications of the programme which I now propose to place before my people, for their deliverance from the present state of depression to which they have been reduced."

In fact, this thesis should be considered his last testament. It covers all aspects, and lays down guidelines for the Punjabi Suba Government or the Sikh Homeland. I have dealt with it in detail in the last Chapter. He gave support to the resolution passed at Ludhiana Conference, and also issued a circular letter to the prominent Akalis criticising Sant Fateh Singh for his dealings with the demand of the Punjabi Suba, and his assurance that he would not ask for any political status for the Sikhs during his proposed talk with the Prime Minister. The stand of Master Tara Singh on the future of the Sikhs evoked criticism from the Hindus who switched their support to Sant Fateh Singh to a greater degree. Lachhman Singh Gill, the then Deputy leader of the opposition in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha, at a press conference on August 3, 1965, named Master Tara Singh's stand as betrayal to the country, and announced that their approach would always be peaceful and orderly, and all they wanted was a Punjabi Suba purely on a linguistic basis. Master Tara Singh's stand, however, enervated the Sant Fateh Singh Akali Dal in regard to the pursuit of the Punjabi Suba demand, and Sant Fateh Singh speaking the same day, i.e., August 3, 1965, at Muktsar, charged the Central Government with communalism, since it had refused to accept their just, legitimate and constitutional demand for the creation of a Punjabi Suba on a linguistic basis.

The Working Committee of the Sant Akali Dal adopted a resolution on August 9, 1965, reiterating the same demand and stating, "that a number of other States have already been formed on a linguistic basis including Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala and even Nagaland. The failure to form a Punjabi Suba on the same principle is a clear discrimination against the people of Punjab." The meeting also authorised Sant Fateh Singh to speak on these lines to the Prime Minister in the

interview on the August 7, 1965. This Working Committee meeting had been attended by all the Jathedars of different districts, and there were also some special invitees, including the adviser of the Akali Dal. It was obvious at that time that a serious move was intended, if the interview failed, to get the basic demand conceded. The interview was a total disappointment to the Akali leader. The note prepared at the interview, and handed over as a version of the talks prepared by the Prime Minister's secretariat, was placed before the Working Committee on August 14, 1965, which again reiterated its demand and expressed its disappointment and pain that in spite of the patriotism and the loyalty by the Sikhs in the service of their country, "The Government of India did not trust the Punjabis in general and the Sikhs in particular." Sant Fateh Singh in the same meeting directed the members of the Working Committee to remain within the precincts of Sri Darbar Sahib as he intended to take a momentous decision in regard to the next step.

Sant Fateh Singh announced from the holy Akal Takhat Sahib to a huge crowd of about 25,000 on August 16, 1965, that he would go on fast unto death from 10th September, 1965, inside the Golden Temple in support of the Punjabi Suba demand, and the interval would give the Government twentyfive days to concede the demand, if they wanted to avert the situation. He also announced that in case he survived the fast for 15 days he would adopt the path of self-immolation by burning himself on the 16th day. In a pathetic address to the multitude, which they listened to in pin-drop silence, he narrated his talks with Prime Minister Shastri, and the disappointment he had experienced at the hands of the Congress leadership in spite of all the patience and preservice he had exhibited for the previous 3 years. The announcement came as a jolt of great magnitude, and evoked a response from more than 100 people, who offered their names for sacrifice on the same lines as adopted by the Akali leader. The decision of Sant Fateh Singh was endorsed by a resolution in the General Body of the Sant Akali Dal in a meeting held soon after.

Such a fast had been resorted to earlier by both the Akali

Kargil, a strategic position which had enabled the infiltration of the 'Mujahids' into the valley. It was in such a situation that 15 members of the Parliament including K. D. Malavia, Bhagwat Jha Azad, Bebhuti Mishra, Yadav, Biswa Nath Ray, all prominent men in public life appealed to the Sant to suspend his fast and self-immolation until the Kashmir crisis, then developed, resolved itself. Sant Fateh Singh replied, however, that India was not at war with Pakistan, and that the situation created by the entry of the infiltrators would continue for some time. He also said that he had remained on tour for about 5 months mainly on a recruiting mission and to mobilise public opinion in favour of the defence measures. He could not, however, change his decision as the situation did not necessitate it. The Akali Dal headed by Master Tara Singh's group also announced their full support to Sant Fateh Singh in his threatened fast and self-immolation, stating, that it endorsed the decision "to arouse the conscience of the Rulers of India in favour of the immediate creation of a Punjabi Suba and the recognising of it as an important step towards the realisation of the final destiny of the Sikh people in free India."

The situation on the Kashmir Frontier, however, deteriorated by August 25, 1965, when Indian forces were forced to cross the cease-fire line and entered Pakistan-occupied Kashmir at two points. Several Pakistani infiltrators had been killed or captured in Kashmir in clashes with the Indian Security Forces. The conflict had escalated, and two Pakistani jet aircrafts crossed the cease-fire line and flew over the Naushera area making the situation more grim. The Indian forces captured the Haji Peer pass on August 30, 1965. It was in these conditions that 15 Congress M. L. As. at Chandigarh on August 31, 1965, expressed the view to the press that the Central Government should accept in principle the demand for Punjabi Suba, and defer its declaration and implementation to a later date. The signatories included Giani Kartar Singh, Narain Singh Shahbazpuri, Umrao Singh and others. This naturally created a reaction in the Hindu members of Parliament including Dewan Chaman Lal, who issued a circular letter opposing this demand. The situation was, however,

demanding, "a self determined political status for the Sikhs" as a people and a nation was the outcome of the delay and the discrimination in the policies of the Government of India. The alternative to this seemed to be the declaration of the whole of the Punjab as a unilingual State. These apprehensions induced Ch. Devi Lal, Siri Ram Sharma, Captain Ranjit Singh, both former Ministers, Balwant Rai Tayal, former Chairman of Hindi Region Committee, Rao Nihal Singh, General Secretary of the legislature party, Sri Chand M. L. C. (Congress) and Ch. Suraj Mal, another former Minister, all Haryana leaders, to jointly say at a press conference, "We are of course, opposed to the Punjab being made a unilingual State with Punjabi as State language. Regional Formula was a limit to which we could agree." They claimed that Hindi was spoken by a majority of the population of the Punjab. *i.e.*, by about 1.5 crores out of 2.01 crores, and, as such, Punjabi was a minority language, and it was unfortunate to call it the dominant language of the State. They expressed their determination to keep the existing Hindi zone in tact, and announced their determination to oppose tooth and nail any proposal to dismember it. A four-man deputation conveyed these views to the Governor. Ch. Hardwari Lal, another prominent leader, also expressed an identical view from his sick-bed. This opposition to the declaration of the whole of the Punjab as unilingual, with Punjabi as State language made it inevitable for Sant Fateh Singh to go on a fast unto death from September 10, 1965.

Efforts, no doubt, were made to sidetrack the issue by calling a convention of the Hindus and Sikhs on September 5, 1965, which was attend by Bhagwat Dyal Sharma, the then President of Provincial Congress Committee, Shri Yash. Arya Samaj leader and former State Minister, Acharya Ram Dev, Ch. Amar Singh, Kumari Lajya Wati and Sadhu Ram M. P. wherein it was resolved that "Revival of the demand of Punjabi Suba when our Jawans are fighting life-and-death struggle in Jammu and Kashmir is all the more regrettable" when the Akali leaders had once accepted the Sachar Formula, and then the Regional Formula as the final solution to the language

problem. The resolution was proposed by Shri Verinders, Editor, 'The Partap' and seconded by Raja Singh, Vice President, District Congress Committee, Ludhiana. But it was known that Sant Fateh Singh was determined to go on his fast and self-immolation as announced.

Sources and Notes

1. "The Tribune", 4th September, 1962.
2. Ibid, 24th January, 1969.

XII

The conflict and hostilities between the two countries, India and Pakistan, escalated into an undeclared war, and the Indian forces were forced to enter the Lahore sector on October 6, 1965, from three sides. The same day, Home Minister Nanda announced in the Lok Sabha the willingness of the Government of India to hold further talks for examining the Punjabi Suba issue afresh and with an open mind; and appealed to Sant Fateh Singh, on behalf of the Prime Minister, to give up the proposed fast and join the nation's mighty efforts for facing Pakistan aggression with a view to preserving the integrity and independence of India. On this appeal, a meeting of the Sant Akali Dal was held, and the following telegram was despatched on behalf of Sant Fateh Singh to the Union Home Minister, "Working Committee held deliberation on your today's statement in the Lok Sabha. It does not meet our demand. I had explained the case of the Panjabi Suba on 7th and 8th August, 1965, and you had agreed that the demand was legitimate and constitutional, but the time was not opportune. Your note delivered the other day totally dismisses the Suba demand. Hence no alternative was left to me but to resolve to sacrifice myself for an injustice. You have expressed the desire, through the statement in the Lok Sabha today, for talks with our representatives, hence I send my representatives after receiving the response." A deputation of five emissaries met the Home Minister on September 8, 1965, at Delhi, and were reported to have been given some assurance. In these circumstances, Sant

Fateh Singh decided on September 9, 1965, to postpone his decision to go on fast on the advice of the Working Committee. A lengthy resolution was passed by Working Committee expressing dissatisfaction with the Government's viewpoint in the light of the discussion by the emissaries, but directed Sant Fateh Singh to postpone the fast temporarily till the end of the conflict with Pakistan, keeping in view the situation on the Punjab border arising out of the Pakistan aggression. President Radhakrishnan in a broadcast on November 11, 1965, dealing with the conflict with Pakistan referred to Sant Fateh Singh's decision to postpone his fast in appreciative terms, saying "I dare say he will be satisfied with the eventual solution of this problem agreed to by the leaders of Punjab."

The three pronged thrust by the Indian forces in the Lahore sector was heroically supported by the civil population of the Punjab, particularly the Sikhs, who contributed tremendously towards this fighting. The Army authorities acknowledged the significant role played by the civilians in the conflict. A senior military officer said that he was surprised when even the porters refused to accept payment for carrying the luggage of the Jawans on all railway stations in the Punjab. The performance of the truck drivers was spectacular. The Punjab Government had placed 3,000 private trucks at the disposal of the Military authorities, and the drivers and conductors and cleaners, all unarmed civilians, carried aid right up to the fighting lines, facing heavy bombing and shelling by the enemies, many of them losing their lives. The peasantry on the border kept the morale high and gave all support to the soldiers fighting their battle on the border. The incidents of bravery, heroism and courage were matters of legend in the course of the conflict.

D. R. Manekar in his book "Twenty-two Fateful Days", very aptly describes the attitude of individual Sikh peasants on the border. He wrote about some whom a reporter had met:

"If we lose our crops we can get them the next year, if we lose our freedom we lose everything."

"We have given up our homes once. We are not going to do it second time. No, never. Nobody can get us out from

here."

The author then writes, "These sentiments respectively by a Punjabi farmer as he swung a scythe through his standing sugar-cane crops to winkle out hiding Pakistani para-troopers, and by a Sarpanch of a border village to a reporter, epitomised the spirit in which the people of the border area took the war at their doorstep."¹

He further comments, "Pakistani radio's blatant wooing of the Sikh community, its offer of a simulated sympathy for the Akali demand for a Punjabi Suba, and incitement to rebel against the Government was laughed at by the Sikhs accompanied by other choicest unprintable Punjabi swear word, while Sant Fateh Singh suspended his fast and agitation for the Panjabi Suba. Pakistan radio was quite apologetic for repeated bombing of the holy city of the Sikhs for whom they had displayed so much solicitude.

"The scenes one witnessed in Amritsar were repeated in the scores of villages all along the 30 miles front in the Lahore sector. Indeed, the enthusiasm of the civilians was infectious as the villagers turned out enmasse to do their bit for the country, and help the Jawans defend their land.

"They took up arms, bailchas and lathis, and joined the police and Army in stalking Pakistani paratroopers, through jungles and fields. They did not hesitate to cut their standing crops of maize and sugar-cane to get out the hiding paratroopers. They hewed tracks through their farms for the Army to advance. They put up roadside stalls to offer free drinks and food to the soldiers passing along the forward area.

"Girls flung packets of chapattis, parched grams and gur into passing Army vehicles. Young boys cycled between the front and Amritsar carrying stocks of cigarettes for the Jawans. There was nothing they would not do for the Army. Many Army and Air Force Officers confessed to me that witnessing such popular emotion brought a lump in the throat. It was indeed a sight for the gods."²

The author then describes the part played even by a smuggler, Sajjan Singh by name, a Jat of an Indian village right on the border, who knew his way on both sides, and

who did a tremendous job in giving information, "Sajjan was entrusted with a reconnaissance job which he carried out with distinction. He brought the local Commanders valuable information of enemy positions and the location of pill boxes along and beyond the Hudhara drain, Noorpur, Ghaga and many other vital points.

"Every day he would go out into enemy territory and kill time in the day pretending to carry out innocent activity in the fields, and at night prowl round or climb a shisham tree to note movements of the enemy troops, and bring home the intelligence."

Manekar writes thus about the services of a Granthi, "Baba Sohan Singh of Sursingh, a deeply religious man and the priest of Sursingh Gurdwara, at 60, daily led a caravan of 5 tongas laden with milk, gur, parched gram and chapatties to the front more than 10 miles away, to distribute them to the Jawans. At the Gurdwara lungar, women volunteers worked day and night to prepare the food for the Baba to take to the forward area."

The contribution of the peasantry during the conflict was tremendous, and was recognised by the Governor of the Punjab when he addressed the joint session of both the Houses of the Legislature on February 14, 1966, and said :

"Whereas our Armed forces personnel enhanced their prestige by their many deeds of daring courage and sacrifice, our people in Punjab—cultivators, traders, workmen, and even women every where—exhibited rare qualities of resourcefulness, forbearance and fortitude, and gave valuable assistance to the Army and the police in many ways, and the public services of all categories played their role magnificently. The zeal, enthusiasm and the daring spirit displayed by the truck-drivers, conductors and cleaners in driving their vehicles against all odds to carry supplies to the Army, our Police our Home Guards in fighting the enemy and apprehending the paratroopers, were truly commendable."

The cease-fire took place on September 26, 1965, on the intervention of the Security Council when U. Thant, the Secretary General, visited the Indian subcontinent and met the

Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan. The two great powers, Soviet Russia and the U.S.A., interceded and used their good offices in this regard. Soon after the announcement of the cease-fire, a statement was made by the Union Home Minister, conveying that the whole question of the Punjabi Suba issue would be examined afresh and efforts would be made to discover a 'co-operative solution' based on goodwill and a reasonable approach. He announced the creation of a cabinet sub-committee consisting of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, then Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Y.B. Chavan and Mahabir Tyagi, which would, from time to time, advise the Parliamentary Committee to be set up with Hukam Singh, Speaker, as its President. The Home Minister expressed his confidence that the deliberations of these committees would lead to a satisfactory solution of the question. He announced that the Parliamentary Committee would be set up by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

The announcement had an all-round support, both inside the Parliament from different parties, and outside from the Sikhs. The Working Committee of the Sant Akali Dal held its meeting on October 11, 1965, and considered the statement of the Union Home Minister, and passed the following resolution:

"After due consideration of the President of India's appeal, dated 11th September, about Sant Fateh Singh's demand for Punjabi Suba and the formation of a three-man cabinet Sub-committee, and the appointment of a Consultative Committee of the two Houses of Parliament with S. Hukum Singh, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, as its Chairman, the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal is of the view that the failure to set a limit for the working of the Sub-committee is a big omission.

"It should have been proper for the Government to accept the demand for the formation of Punjabi Suba to satisfy the brave Punjabis in general, and the Sikhs in particular, soon after the cessation of hostilities between India and Pakistan, instead of forming these two committees. This should have been all the more necessary, when the Hindi and Punjabi regions are already in existence and there appears to be no

difficulty in the formation of Punjabi Suba. But in view of the present atmosphere created by the appointment of the two Committees soon after the cease-fire, and the assurance given by the President of India immediately after the postponement of Sant Fateh Singh's decision to go on a fast unto death, followed by self-immolation which indicated the Akali Dal's broad-mindedness, it demands that the working of the Committee should be completed soon, and a final decision should be taken about the formation of Punjabi Suba without any delay by fixing the target date.

The Working Committee adheres to its previous resolution of September 9, 1965, (whereby it had directed Sant Fateh Singh to postpone his fast) that Sant Fateh Singh's settled programme for the satisfaction of Punjabi Suba demand will stand. The Working Committee will not be satisfied with anything short of Punjabi Suba, but keeping in view the circumstances arising from the President of India's assurance and the formation of the Committees by the Government of India, Sant Ji should not for the present fix any date for the implementation of the previous settled programme (of fast and self-immolation) "

The Master Akali Dal, however, in its 16th All India Conference at New Delhi took a different stand in a resolution of the Working Committee passed on November 2, 1965 :

"1. This conference welcomes the announcement of the Government to consider afresh the demarcation of Punjabi Suba in the North of India ; and unreservedly ;

2 Supports and demands immediate setting up of a unilingual Punjabi State on linguistic basis and hereby ;

3. Reaffirms that neither the demand nor its acceptance can be legitimately confused or equated with any political demand of the Sikh people as such ; and

4 Demands that the Government demarcated and universally accepted and recognised boundaries of the present Punjabi-speaking regions should alone form the basis of the reorganisation of the Punjab on linguistic basis."

The Union Home Minister's announcement about the examination of the issue 'afresh' activated the opposition to the issue again. The Working Committee of the Arya Pratinidhi

Sabha in its meeting on October 3, 1965, warned all concerned that it would be dangerous to disturb the present set-up, and any change in the Regional Formula would be resisted inasmuch as this would further disintegrate and weaken the border State. An Ekta Committee of Hindu organisations was constituted to take necessary steps in this regard. The Chief Minister, Ram Kishan, in a statement to the press, opposed the bifurcation of the Punjab and the executive of the Congress legislative party in its meeting on October 6, 1965, endorsed his views. The Executive Committee of the Provincial Congress Committee also met at Chandigarh on October 11, 1965, and appointed a sub-committee comprising Chief Minister Ram Kishan, Home Minister Darbara Singh, Brij Bhan, Ch. Amar Singh, Yash, Amar Nath Sharma, and Tarlochan Singh Riasi, as members and Pandit Mohan Lal as convener to draw up a memorandum opposing the creation of Punjabi Suba. By that time, the Consultative Committee of the Parliament comprising 22 members from both Houses, had been constituted and the opposition forces started their canvassing amongst the members to turn them against the Punjabi Suba issue. The legislators from the Hindi Zone gathered in a meeting in Rohtak on October 17, wherein it was resolved to oppose any move either to declare the existing Punjab a unilingual State with Punjabi as the State language or to dismember the Hindi Zone. In pursuance of this, resignations from the legislators began to be collected, and it was reported in the press that 25 members of the Congress Legislative Party from Haryana had agreed to send in their resignations on the issue to the President of the National Congress. Chief Minister Ram Kishan again, in a statement to the press on October 21, 1965, declared that the State Cabinet was opposed to any bifurcation of the Punjab and was supported by Gurdial Singh Dhillon, Parbodh Chander, Yash and Darbara Singh, who gave individual statements against the bifurcation of the Punjab. The Sub-committee appointed by the Provincial Congress Committee for the drafting of a memorandum opposing the bifurcation of the Punjab for submission to the Parliamentary Consultative Committee suggested in its first meeting on November 1, 1965,

that Himachal Pradesh should be merged with Punjab, and the three zones of Haryana, Himanchal Pradesh, and Punjab should be given a regional committee to function as one joint State. This suggestion of the Sub-committee was endorsed by the Executive of the Provincial Congress Committee by an overwhelming majority in its meeting on November 16, 1965, and an announcement was made that the bifurcation of the Punjab would be opposed. The main speakers in the meeting in support of this view were the Chief Minister Ram Kishan, Home Minister Darbara Singh, Gurdial Singh Dhillon and Pandit Mohan Lal. The Ekta Committee submitted a memorandum to the Consultative Committee conveying a serious suspicion about the loyalty of the Sikhs to India, and expressed its apprehension that the Sikhs would join hands with Pakistan when the Suba was created. This appeared in a section of the press. The State cabinet of the Punjab also appointed four Ministers to meet the Prime Minister and the Parliamentary Consultative Committee on Punjabi Suba, and other leaders, to apprise them of their stand against the bifurcation of the Punjab. The four Ministers appointed for this mission were Rizak Ram, Ch. Ranbir Singh, Darbara Singh and the Chief Minister Ram Kishan himself.

This move of the opposition had its reaction on the Sikhs. The Akali members in the Vidhan Sabha tabled an adjournment motion on 3rd November, 1965, raising the issue of "the arrogant and insulting remarks made in the memorandum on the linguistic organisation of the Punjab as drafted by the Ekta Samiti, and published in the section of the press." The movers wanted to discuss, "the alleged failure of the Government to take action against the malicious and deliberate attempt of some communal leaders in the garb of the Ekta Samiti to give out that if Punjabi Suba was formed the Sikhs would join hands with Pakistan." Visibly agitated, Gurnam Singh, the then leader of the Akali group, said, "We cannot tolerate these insults. Have the Hindus taken the monopoly of loyalty to the country? We want the Government to take action against these newspapers".

The original announcement about consideration of the

Punjabi Suba issue afresh, provided that 'cooperative' solution would be found by the Parliamentary Consultative Committee in consultation with the Cabinet Sub-committee constituted for the purpose, implying thereby that such recommendation would be considered by the Government. But the Parliamentary Consultative Committee took up the stand, and correctly too, that no Parliamentary Committee presided over by the Speaker could be expected to make its recommendations to the Parliament. At this the Home Minister Nanda said that the Parliamentary Consultative Committee was not a 'State Reorganisation Commission,' and the question of the reorganisation of the joint State did not fall within its purview. This statement created a difference between the Speaker and the Union Home Minister, and a serious controversy became imminent. The Union Home Minister however, gave way, and in his letter to the President of Indian National Congress wrote that the Committee of Members of both Houses of Parliament, presided over by the Speaker, could be trusted to function for the purpose for which the Committee had been set up and that, "it was not for any individual or body outside to seek to decide its limits or subject it to criticism." The situation on the issue was still fluid when news came of the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri at Tashkent on January 11, 1966. Mahabir Tyagi, one of the members of the Sub-committee, resigned from the Cabinet on January 14, 1966. Mrs Indira Gandhi was elected leader of the party and Prime Minister on January 20, 1966.

She wrote a letter soon after to Sant Fateh Singh, requesting him to appoint a small committee to discuss the question of Punjabi Suba with the Cabinet Sub-committee and assist in finding a solution. She assured the Akali leader that the Government was more than anxious to solve the issue as early as possible, but the problem, according to her, was a complicated one, and had to be examined in all its aspects. This move was obviously to circumvent the proceedings of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee, of which the majority of the members were reported to be sympathetic to a favourable solution of the Punjabi Suba issue in order to satisfy the Sikhs.

The general impression at the time was that Mrs. Gandhi was not in favour of the creation of Punjabi Suba, and would follow the line which her father had taken in this regard. Therefore, Sant Fateh Singh in his reply to the Prime Minister turned down the request to send his representatives for discussion with the Cabinet Sub-committee. He told the pressmen on February 27, that by sending representatives for negotiations, the settlement of Punjabi Suba issue would be prolonged. He added that the Central Government had already taken six months, and he could not wait any longer. The delaying tactics involved in these negotiations made him write a letter to her on February 24, 1966, in which he announced that he would wait for the decision of the Government on the Punjabi Suba issue till the end of March, whereafter he would resort to his original pledge of fasting upto death and self-immolation. In a statement to the press on February 28, 1966, he declared, "I will wait for 4 weeks and after that, if the Punjabi Suba is not formed, or in case the Government does nothing, I will be compelled to revive my programme." He emphasised at the same time that his declaration should not be considered a threat, nor did he like to place the Government in an awkward position. He, nevertheless, could not withdraw from his original stand.

The obvious change in the attitude of the Government of India headed by Mrs. Gandhi had an unhealthy impact on the Sikhs. The President of the Master's Akali Dal declared in a meeting at Jullundur on February 26 that even the establishment of Punjabi Suba could not be the final and permanent solution of the Sikh problem. The open session of the Akali Conference under the auspices of this group passed the following resolution on February 27, at Jullunder :

"After careful and due deliberations on the current situation in the country in the context of the aims and the objectives of the Shiromani Akali Dal, it is agreed that the following resolution passed by the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal at Ludhiana on August 22, 1965, be unreservedly supported and passed namely, that

1. After carefully considering the position of the Sikhs

nce India became free ;

2. It notes that all decision-making power at all levels of the State apparatus has been securely gathered in the hands of the Hindus ; and

3. That these powers are consistently being applied to discriminate against the Sikhs, to demoralise and degrade them with the ultimate object of submerging the Sikh people into the Hindu mass, and thus make the Sikhs pass out from the pages of history ; and

4. That this being done after a cynical repudiation of the solemn assurances given to the Sikhs by Hindu leaders in and before 1947, to make the Sikhs agree to merge in a common Indian Nationality, pledging recognition of a Sikh entity within free India, where the Sikh people can function autonomously, pending which recognition, the political power in the Indian Punjab was to be shared on a fifty-fifty basis at all levels ; and

5. Resolves that the Sikh people are entitled to demand a self-determined political status for themselves within the republic of the Union of India such as might enable them to preserve themselves and prosper freely "

The second resolution passed by the same conference was as follows :

"1. This conference takes cognisance of the ill conceived, selfish and ruinous pursuit of policies by the Congress party as rulers of the country since 1947, in particular, its wrong headed doctrinaire erosion into the dignity of the citizen and his economic autonomy, its calculated suppression of the peasants in regard to discrimination against the Sikh people in particular through State policies in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, with a view to devalue and degrade them in a free India, and its persistent refusal to demarcate a unilingual Punjabi Suba inhabited by Punjabi speaking people ; and

2. Warns the Congress Rulers of the serious consequences that are bound to cause great distress to the nation and incalculable damage to the unity and integrity of the country ; and

3. Makes it clear that any trick or formula calculated to

hamper the progress of the Punjabi speaking Punjab towards its true destiny is bound to recoil on the heads of those who practise them."

The most unfortunate aspect of the situation was that even important sections of the Congress did not welcome this announcement of the Government for re-examination of the issue. There was pandemonium in the Lok Sabha on February 28, 1965, for about half an hour, when the Speaker announced that the Parliamentary Consultative Committee would submit its report to the Parliament, as such committees under the Chairmanship of the Speaker never submit their reports to the Government. There was an angry protest from Harish Chander Mathur, a prominent Congress member, who condemned the Government for having entrusted a controversial issue like the Punjabi Suba to a consultative committee headed by the Speaker Hukam Singh. The opposition to the Punjabi Suba in the hindu section at the highest level compelled the Prime Minister to say in the Rajya Sabha on March 2, 1966, that whatsoever the decision was taken on the Punjabi Suba issue, it would be such as to give maximum satisfaction to the largest number of people and that it would not create new problems and difficulties in the country.

The Parliamentary Consultative Committee had invited representation from individuals and organisations, which poured in thick and fast. The reports of the proceedings of the Parliamentary Committee, though held in camera, showed that the majority of the members felt that the issue called for solution, and the only solution that appeared was the creation also of Haryana. These rumours again gave rise to protests from different quarters. Forty leading industrialists of Ludhiana sent the following telegram to the Chairman of the Committee and others, "We industrialists having a stake in Punjab, are disturbed at the news of the creation of Punjabi Suba. If Punjabi Suba is created, economic life would be paralysed. The Suba demand is based on naked communalism and amounts to seizing of power. The industrialists apprehend a serious danger of being exterminated. Pray do not purchase doubtful peace, risking life and property and involving large scale individual

migration." The text of the telegram reflected the sad thinking of the intelligentsia amongst the hindus in Punjab, and the apprehension that the shifting of power in the proposed Punjabi Suba from hindus to sikhs also was not palatable to such sections. This telegram was followed by a deputation to the Prime Minister and other leaders. Yagya Dutt Sharma, General Secretary of the Punjab Jan Sangh, announced that he would go on a fast unto death at Amritsar against the attitude of Government, which had become impotent and ineffective. Great pressure was put on the Government of India by the hindu sections of the Punjab. But the happy feature of the situation was that the issue had come into the hands of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee, an independent body beyond the pressure of the executive, including leaders of different parties, who could have a dispassionate and detached approach to the problem. In view of the acceptance of the principle of creation of linguistic states in the rest of the country, the findings of this Consultative Committee in favour of the Punjabi Suba seemed inevitable. Therefore, the Congress Working Committee felt that the Government of India would not be able to resist the implementation of such findings and recommendations when the Report was submitted to the Parliament. Hence it felt that it would be more advisable that the credit for the creation of the Punjabi Suba should be taken by the National Congress itself in order to keep a hold on the minds of the sikh masses, rather than allow it to be taken by the other parties in the Parliamentary Consultative Committee. Therefore, the Congress Working Committee in its sitting on March 9, 1956, passed a resolution recommending to the Union Government to constitute a State with Punjabi as State language out of the then existing State of Punjab. It also requested the Government to take necessary steps for the purpose. The Working Committee came to this conclusion after three hours of discussion when, according to reports in the press, the majority of the members supported such a decision. Patil was reported to have initiated acceptance, while Morarji Desai opposed the recommendations and demanded that his dissenting note be recorded in the minutes. The text of the resolution

was, "Out of the existing State of Punjab, a State with Punjabi as State language should be formed. The Government is requested to take necessary steps for the purpose" Fakhur-ud-din Ali Ahmed, a prominent member of the Working Committee, when questioned by pressmen if a hindi-speaking area like Haryana Region would be entitled to have a separate State of their own, he said that "If they wanted to remain outside, they could do so."

This was a momentous decision, closing a painful chapter in the history of the sufferings and sacrifices of the Sikhs during the past 16 years. What ultimately persuaded the Central leadership to agree to and accept such a decision is a matter for research by historians. We are too near the events to have a detached view in this regard. Nehru had resisted the demand with all the force at his command. In Chief Minister Kairon, he found a handy stick with which to beat the Sikhs, and to bring them down ruthlessly. Chief Minister Kairon had left no means to demoralise the community and eliminate its self-respect. Never has a people made such sacrifices and undergone so many sufferings as the Sikhs did, for a cause and an objective so simple and so true that it had become to be an ideology. Even after Nehru's death, and the removal of Chief Minister Kairon, the Government of India under Shastri rejected the demand outright. Hence it can be said without fear of contradiction, that it was not the sacrifices of the Sikhs or their sufferings that persuaded Central Government to concede the demand, nor was it a regard for their sentiments or feelings, nor was it to satisfy their ambitions, it could not be the threat by Sant Fateh Singh to go unto fast and immolate himself either, as the Government of India had faced previous two such fasts by Akali leaders. Sant Fateh Singh had gone on fast unto death in December 1960, without any effect on the Government of India, and had been persuaded to break it by Master Tara Singh. Master Tara Singh had himself gone on fast unto death, and had been persuaded to break it on assurances that were not honoured. What then could be the reasons that motivated Prime Minister Shastri to accept an examination of the issue afresh, having rejected it only a few months earlier.

Could it not be that the Central leadership had felt that the role of Sikhs in the Indo-Pakistan conflict was such that it necessitated and called for their satisfaction in order to keep them aligned with India in a future struggle of the nature? Could it be that the demand by the Hindus of the Haryana area for a separate State, and their refusal to accept Punjabi even as a second language had become more vocal and pressing? Could it also be that both these factors contributed to this decision? Possibly it was anxiety to keep the Sikh soldiery satisfied that motivated this move. The fact that the Congress Working Committee had resolved only that "out of the existing State of Punjab, a State with Punjabi as State language should be formed" establishes that Haryana was only a bye-product, which need not have been but for the report of Parliamentary Consultative Committee set up under the chairmanship of Speaker Hukam Singh.

There is another factor also that was relevant to the issue. Speaker Hukam Singh and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha selected and nominated the members of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of both the Houses. The leaders of different parties and groups could not be ignored. All view points had to be accommodated. The setting up of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee came to be such that no sooner had the formation of the Committee been announced, than it came to be realised that it would not reject outright the Punjabi Suba demand, and that the justification for conceding it would be considered. It could not also be expected that it would be influenced or pressurised by the Government's view point. It was also obvious that the Report of such a High Level Committee would be of the greatest importance, for it would emanate from the representatives of the sovereign body. Such a Report could not be rejected or modified by the Government without the consent of the Parliament. Similarly, the ambit and scope of reference of such a body could not be circumscribed or limited, unless it was by a motion in both the Houses of the Parliament. Such a motion restricting the scope of the Consultative Committee would have provided or brought to the surface the charge of discriminatory treatment of the

Sikhs Therefore also, the Central Congress leadership felt convinced that it must accept the demand for the formation of Punjabi Suba. Hence, they thought that acceptance of the inevitable was the better part of discretion, so that credit might be taken by the Congress Working Committee for giving the directive to the Government of India to implement the decision.

No sooner had the decision been taken by the Congress Working Committee requesting the Government of India to form a State with Punjabi as State language out of the then State of Punjab, than there was a complete strike by the Hindus in Punjab for three days. The trouble spread throughout the State but was more intense in the towns of Amritsar, Jullundur, Ludhiana, and Hissar. The Police had to use tear gas shells on several anti-Suba crowds at different places. There were numerous cases of arson at Ludhiana, Panipat, Amritsar. The police had even to open fire on violent anti-Punjabi Suba demonstrators at Jullundur, Bhowani, Abohar, Jind and Ambala Cantt. The Union Minister of State was forced to admit that the situation was difficult and tense. The trouble lasted for several days, during which the total arrests made by the police were 2528 persons. More than 200 persons were injured, and several killed. Property estimated to be of the value of nearly 20 lakhs was destroyed. Three Congressmen were burnt alive at Panipat. These happenings were eye-opener to the Sikhs, indicating the communal feelings of the other community working against the Sikh interests. The Working Committee of the Jan Sangh in its meeting on the 10th March, expressed its determination to resist the division of the Punjab, and said in the resolution, "The Working Committee is of the definite opinion that the conceding of the demand for the Punjabi-speaking State by the Congress amounts to a further division of the already truncated Punjab State, which is an act of utter lack of foresight and an abject surrender of national interest and national integrity before the Akali separatism and communalism. The Committee has no doubt about the threat that Akali separatism would ultimately endeavour to convert the Punjabi State into a communal Sikh State, and instead of increasing the Defence potential of this border

State, by not only not retaining its unity, but by not merging the *Himachal Pradesh* into it, the Congress has tried to weaken it, and the coming generations will not forgive it for the commission of the sin. We urge upon the people to conduct such an agitation peacefully and maintain communal unity."

This resolution was an indication as to who was responsible for the trouble that ensued in the State after the announcement of the formation of the Punjabi Suba. This resolution was also an indication of the attitude of the majority towards this minority. The decision of the Congress Working Committee was considered by the Union Cabinet, and it expanded its Sub-committee of 3 to include 3 more Union Ministers. It would be recalled that originally the Cabinet Sub-committee consisted of 3 Ministers but on the resignation of Mahabir Tyagi and elevation of Mrs. Indira Gandhi to Prime Ministership, it consisted of Home Minister Nanda, Defence Minister Chavan and Labour Minister Jagjivan Ram. Additions were made by including Transport Minister Reddy, Finance Minister Chaudhri, Planning Minister Ashok Mehta and Law Minister Pathak. Mrs. Gandhi said on March 15, 1966, in the Lok Sabha that the ultimate decision regarding the creation of Punjabi Suba had yet to be taken by the Government and said the rights of the minority, meaning thereby the Hindu minority, would be safeguarded. This statement itself was an indication that the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi expected that the Punjabi Suba would be such that it would have Sikh majority.

Sant Fateh Singh expressed his gratification at the decision of the Congress Working Committee, and laid emphasis on Hindu-Sikh unity in the proposed Punjabi Suba. Master Tara Singh, commenting on the resolution said "My views about the self-determined political status of the Sikhs remain unchanged. The Government should in fairness form a Sikh majority area." Asked by the pressmen if, after such a right is given, the "New Sikh State" would not have some kind of association with Pakistan, Master Tara Singh replied, "We would not like to go from the frying pan to the fire" and added that, "during the time of Jinnah, an offer for a separate

Sikh State had been made to him. He rejected it as Mr. Jinnah would not give them the right to secede. Secondly, a powerful State can easily devour a small State at will. Basically we cannot be separated from Hindus as our culture is the same. But I am opposed to the domination."³

The Report of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee was published on March 18, 1966. According to its recommendations, it said that it had been the earnest desire of the Committee to find a cooperative solution of the linguistic problem facing Punjab which would be universally acceptable to all. After persuing the large number of memorandums and representations received by the Committee, and hearing the various view-points expressed by different witnesses representing various shades of opinion, it soon became known that it was not possible to arrive at any cooperative solution which would be unanimously acceptable to all without reservation. Nor was unanimity possible on all matters in a democratic set-up. The next best thing for the Committee was to look for a solution which would be acceptable to the largest number of people, and it was also to be in the best interest not only of the people of the State of Punjab, but also in the best interest of the country as a whole, from the point of view of affinity between the various communities and the economic and cultural well-being of the people. The Committee enumerated various alternatives, and came to the following conclusion :

"(a) Status quo, which was supported by some evidence but the Committee came to the finding that the maintenance of the status quo in the State would cause further unrest among the people. Any make-shift arrangement is not likely to provide a lasting solution. The Committee said that even the Chief Minister of Punjab demanded that the present position needed change, and the status quo in its entirety was not possible.

(b) Strengthening the Regional Committees, the Committee came to the conclusion that the working of the Regional Committees had been a failure, and added that nobody was satisfied with the working of these Committees and in fact some of the witnesses before the Committees emphatically

said, "The sooner they be scrapped the better." The Committee, therefore, feels that the idea of continuing the Regional Committee should be formally given up.

(c) The Committee feels the only alternative which found the largest measure of support was that the present State of Punjab should be reorganised on a linguistic basis, on which basis all States of the country had been formed. This solution will not only satisfy the political and economic aspirations of the people of the respective areas, but also end for all time the political controversy on this vexed question in this strategic border area and help in removing the tension prevailing for the last so many years.

The Committee rejected the suggestion of referendum on the ground that it was neither feasible nor desirable. It came to the conclusion after careful consideration of these viewpoints expressed before the Committee and taking all relevant facts into consideration. The Committee has come to the conclusion that it would be in the larger interest of the people of these areas and of the country as a whole, that the present State of Punjab be reorganised on a linguistic basis. The Punjabi Region specified in the first schedule of the Regional Committee Order 1957 should form a unilingual Punjabi State. The hill areas of Punjab in the Hindi region of Punjab which are contiguous to Himachal Pradesh, and have linguistic and cultural affinity with that territory should be merged with Himachal Pradesh. The remaining area of the Hindi-speaking region of Punjab should be formed as a separate Hindi region called Haryana State. The distribution of the population and the density of population in the (i) Hilly area (ii) Haryana area (iii) area of existing State of Punjab is given in an appendix.

In case any boundary adjustment is to be made between the three States, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, a Committee of experts should be set up immediately to suggest necessary adjustments".

The most surprising part, however, of the report had been that the Parliamentary Consultative Committee presided over by Speaker Hukam Singh, should have made a specific recommendation that "Punjabi Region specified in the first schedule

to the Regional Committees Order 1957 should form a unilingual Punjabi State" and "In case there is any boundary adjustment to be made between the three States, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, a Committee of experts should be set up immediately to suggest such adjustments." Hukam Singh knew fully well that the scope of reference for such a committee of experts could only be based on the recommendations and Report of the Consultative Committee and the Government could not go beyond it. Hence, by being an architect of and party to such recommendations, he had laid down the shape and limit of the Punjabi Suba. Hukam Singh had been a member of the Akali Dal Working Committee from 1948, and the President of the Shiromani Akali Dal when the resolution pertaining to the demand of the Punjabi Suba had been specifically made, and the area considered to be the Punjabi Speaking area had been clarified, and it had been stated therein that the entire district of Ambala, all the tehsils of Karnal district except Panipat, and also tehsil Sirsa and sub-tehsil Fatehbad were all areas known and considered to be Punjabi-speaking. He was also aware that Kangra had also been considered and claimed as a Punjabi-speaking area, for Kangri is only a dialect of Punjabi. He had been party to this demand, and was also aware that the Hindi-speaking zone had been created on a communal basis in spite of the protest from the then Punjab Ministers. It had been specifically laid down at that time that the arrangements were only tentative and temporary. He also knew that Chandigarh had been a part of Kharar Tehsil, and should have been included in the Punjabi region in this demarcation then, but being a capital of both the regions, it was made bilingual as a temporary measure. Therefore, the Report of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee was the greatest betrayal of the Punjabi Suba cause, when it set its seal to the declaration of the Punjabi region alone as a Punjabi-speaking State, with minor adjustments by a committee of experts. This was also contrary to the stand taken by Speaker Hukam Singh on August 19, 1961, when Master Tara Singh was on fast and when, Hukam Singh speaking on Punjabi Suba during

the Lok Sabha debate, opposed its creation, pleading that the Prime Minister should implement his views given in a speech at Rajpura by declaring the whole of the Punjab as unilingual.

Hukam Singh's report only truncated Punjab in a way which gave birth to the present predicament. His advocacy of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh proved costly to Punjab and badly cut its vital links.

There is no gain-saying another fact also, that after having found that the formation of Punjabi-speaking State could not be avoided, the Central Congress leadership decided to limit it to a minimum extent. An incident in this context is very enlightening. Mrs. Indira Gandhi happened to be travelling in a plane in November 1966 along with Prabodh Chander and Gurdial Singh Dhillon from Delhi to Amritsar and during the course of the talk, Prabodh Chander suggested the inclusion of Kangra in the Punjabi Suba for the reason that Kangri was a dialect of Punjabi. The suggestion, no doubt, was made with a view to lessening the effectiveness of the Sikh percentage, but Mrs. Indira Gandhi retorted saying, how could she permit the inhabitants of Kangra to become 'Mundus' of the Punjabis. It would be recalled that most of the domestic servants in Punjab towns came from Kangra. This illustrated the mental outlook at the highest level of the Congress leadership on the formation of a Punjabi-speaking State. This is further obvious from the events that followed. No sooner was the report of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee published, than a deputation of leading Hindus belonging to all groups and parties including the Jan Sangh, Ekta Samiti, the Arya Samaj and even the Congress, comprising Balram Dass Tandon, (Jan Sangh), Virender and Yash (Congress), Krishan Lal, Keshyab Chander, Baldev Parkash and others waited upon the Home Minister Nanda and other members of the Cabinet-Sub-Committee on March 20, 1966, when the following statement was given to the press by the Law Minister Pathak, "After prolonged discussions, the representatives of the Punjab Ekta Samiti, the Jan Sangh and the Arya Samaj made certain proposals. They will be considered by the

Government. Further discussion will take place in the future, and the Home Minister again made an appeal to those representatives to persuade Yagya Datt Sharma to give up his fast."⁴ This was obviously with a view to limiting the scope of reference to the Committee of experts in regard to the boundaries of the proposed Punjabi Suba. In this regard, 17 Congress legislators from Haryana held in a meeting in which they made a demand that the linguistic organisation of Punjab should be made exclusively on the basis of 1961 census, and further declared that any deviation from the course would be totally unacceptable to the people of Haryana and would lead to grave consequences. This meeting set up a two-member Sub-committee to prepare the case and present it before the Commission, when appointed. The Committee further authorised Bhagwat Dyal Sharma to set up another Committee to pursue the case. Another meeting of the 25 leading public men from Haryana on the 10th April made a demand that Chandigarh and Kalka sub-territory belonged to Haryana and must be included therein. These demands supported the impression that the Central leadership were out to limit the boundaries of the proposed Punjabi State to a minimum. Therefore, Sant Fateh Singh sent a telegram on April 13, 1966, to the Prime Minister demanding that the census figures of pre-partition days should be the basis of the reorganisation of Punjab, and not 1961 census figures, which were bogus and based on a communal approach. In his letters, which followed the telegram, to the Prime Minister, Union Home Minister, Defence Minister and the Congress President he wrote, "The just and fair decision taken by the Congress Working Committee on the Punjabi Suba issue has been appreciated all over the world, and the Working Committee members deserve congratulations for the same. We, however, regret that the Government of India is appointing the Commission on the reorganisation of Punjab, and is going to give a direction that it should be demarcated on the basis of the 1961 census. This is very bad indeed." He further wrote that it was widely known that the 1961 census was held on communal lines, and that Nehru had even then con-

demned the attitude of the Hindus in disowning Punjabi and giving Hindi as their language which was a wrong thing. The Sant demanded in his letter that the pre-partitioned census be considered the basis. Other Sikh organisations also warned the Government that demarcation on the 1961 census basis would only support the implementation of two-nation theory by considering the Hindus and the Sikhs apart, as it cannot be denied that 1961 census was held during the Punjabi Suba movement on communal lines.

The basis, however, of this apprehension was the recommendations of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee, which specified the Punjabi region as Punjabi Suba with minor adjustments, and that again was encouraging the Central Congress leadership to make the 1961 census as the basis. What reasons Speaker Hukam Singh had in limiting the Punjabi Suba boundary is a matter which is only known to him. There were rumours which attributed all sorts of motives to him. It is said that he had been one of the negotiators in 1956 on behalf of the Akali Dal with the Government of India, when the strength and the image of the Akali Dal was at its highest. It was he, who had got the demand of the Punjabi Suba whittled down to what was then known as the Regional Formulas and made a settlement on this basis. He was a member of the Lok Sabha then, and was responsible for initiating the merger of the Akali Dal in the Congress. The price he was paid was the Deputy Speakership of the Lok Sabha for which he was proposed by the Prime Minister. Again in 1961, when Master Tara Singh was on fast, he was one of the two Sikhs who opposed the Punjabi Suba demand on the floor of the House, in spite of the fact he had been one of the sponsors and supporters of the demand from the very outset and his personal paper 'The Spokesman' supported and financed at one time by the Akali Dal, had always been espousing the cause of the Punjabi Suba. This opposition on the floor of the House brought him its price a year later, when he was elected Speaker again on the proposal of the Prime Minister. Yet again, he was now the architect of the Report of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee which

specified and circumscribed the limits of the Punjabi Suba, and it was generally said then that he would have a high sinecure on his retirement as a Speaker. This prophecy proved to be true and he was appointed Governor of Rajasthan soon after. Truly some politicians seem to be purchasable commodities ?

The Union Home Minister announced the appointment of a Commission on April 17, 1965, in the Lok Sabha, with the following scope of reference :

"The Commission shall examine the existing boundary of the Hindi and the Punjabi region of the present State of Punjab and recommend what adjustments, if any, are necessary in that regard to secure the linguistic homogeneity of the States of Punjab and Haryana. The Commission shall also indicate the boundaries of the hill areas of the present State of Punjab which are contiguous to Himachal Pradesh, and have linguistic and cultural affinity with that territory. The Commission shall apply the linguistic principle with due regard to the census of 1961 and other relevant considerations. The Commission may also take into account such other factors as administrative convenience and facility of communications, and will ordinarily ensure that the adjustments they may recommend do not involve the breaking of existing Tehsils." This declaration, instead of giving scope of enlarging the boundaries of the existing Punjabi region, put in jeopardy the future of five Tehsils, namely, Nalagarh, Una, Fazilka, Pathankot and Kharar. This came as a shock to the Sikhs, and Sant Fateh Singh, who was still in the premises of Sri Darbar Sahib, and had declared he would remain there for another 40 days despite the fulfilment of his pledge taken on August 15, 1966, said to the pressmen after this announcement that "the census of 1961 was taken during the Punjabi Suba agitation. The communal minded people had declared Hindi as their mother tongue although their real mother tongue was Punjabi. Because this had happened under the influence of communalism, there was no question of accepting the 1961 census as the basis for reorganising Punjab. I consider the census taken in 1891 to 1932 as a correct solution of the

problem.” Both the groups of the Akali Dal protested against the Government’s decision in announcing the 1961 census as the basis for the demarcation of the boundaries of Punjabi Suba. Master Tara Singh adopted a tougher attitude and declared boycott of the proceedings of the Commission. The Sant Akali Dal, however, adopted a resolution in its meeting of the Working Committee on April 26, 1965, stating that the decision was no longer acceptable to the Akali Dal as the basis of the reorganisation had been declared to be the 1961 census which was not the basis of language but of religion. The Dal, however, decided to put the case before the Commission in the light of the reference that the scope included a consideration of other factors. Punjabi Region Ministers of the cabinet in their meeting on April 26, 1966, considered the steps to be taken to present Punjab’s claim before the Boundary Commission, and an examination of old documents and records concerning the disputed areas was taken in hand. The consensus of opinion was that the 1961 census as the basis for demarcation was not correct. A seventeen-member Sub-committee was appointed by the Punjab Pradesh Congress. The executive met on the 4th May at Chandigarh and strongly opposed the consideration of the 1961 census as the basis for the demarcation of boundaries. It said in a resolution “that the 1961 census was based on communal considerations, and even Nehru had declared it as incorrect and bogus.”*

The Haryana Legislators and public men, of course, applauded the decision of the Government in making the 1961 census as its basis. How and why the Central leadership made the 1961 census as the basis for carving out the Punjabi Suba from the then Punjab State is an anomaly which needs examination. One fact, however, stands prominent, that for 15 years the Central Congress leadership had resisted such a demarcation under the fear, that once the Punjabi Suba was created, the Sikhs might be in majority in it, and giving them a Homeland on the border which would create all sorts a problems later. Yet, when it came to actual demarcation, calculated plans were drawn up to ensure that such area

should be as small as possible knowing very well that it would have Sikh majority. The present generation of the Sikhs has an all-India outlook, and has fought the battle of freedom, shoulder to shoulder, with the National Congress and is keen to maintain the unity and integrity of the country, but who can guarantee the ambitions and the attitude of the coming generations. The only conclusion that could be drawn from the scope of reference was that an effort was made to make the Suba as small as possible, economically inviable and isolate it from its contiguity with the Jammu and Kashmir State by taking away even Pathankot tehsil. This, however, could not be done as Pathankot tehsil was not a hilly area, and had no contiguity with the Hindi region of the then Punjab.

The personnel of the Commission was announced on April 23, 1966, with a sitting Judge of the Supreme Court as its Chairman and two retired senior civil officers as its members. It was again astounding that the Commission should comprise members, who did not know even word of Punjabi, had no knowledge of the area, and were not required to have an on-the-spot examination for adjustment of the boundaries. Therefore, how this could be called a committee of experts as recommended in the Report of the Consultative Committee was beyond understanding.

The Commission started its sittings at Chandigarh inviting representations from individuals and organisations. The Sant Akali Dal submitted a detailed representation claiming the entire district of Ambala, all the tehsils of Karnal except Panipat, and also the tehsil of Sirsa, besides the sub-tehsils of Fatehabad and Guhla in Hissar district as part of the Punjabi-speaking State and the already demarcated Punjabi region. The claim itself falsifies the contention that the objective of the Punjabi Suba demand had been the creation of a Sikh majority area. At no stage had the Akali Dal made such a demand. Khushwant Singh in the 'History of the Sikhs' writes, "It was no secret that in the Punjabi Suba as it came to be known, the Sikhs would form a majority of the population and the basis of the Punjabi language and literature was the sacred

writing of the Sikhs. The demand for the Suba was in fact one for a Sikh State ; language was only the sugar coating."* This premise is contrary to facts. The representations by the Sant Akali Dal falsify it. It is surprising that the learned author of the 'History of the Sikhs' should come to the conclusion that the language was only a sugar coating.

The Akali Dal demand was strenuously placed before the Commission, supported by facts and figures based on the pre-partitioned census, that the districts of Ambala and Karnal minus Panipat tehsil and parts of Hissar were Punjabi-speaking to all intents and purposes, as a large number of the migrants from West Punjab settled down in these areas. The Ministers from the Punjab Region also placed their case on similar lines, submitting therein that Kangra was also a Punjabi-speaking region and in this regard I was briefed by the Punjabi members of the State cabinet. It was a painful surprise for me to find that Hindu members of the cabinet belonging to Punjabi Region would not sign a representation on these lines, nor would they, nor did they, join their Sikh colleagues before the Commission. Efforts were made by the Sikh members of the cabinet to get the signatures of the then Chief Minister, Ram Kishan and Minister Parbodh Chander to sign the Cabinet Member's case but they avoided this. This again was an ample proof of the fact that the Hindu leadership of the Punjabi Region, presumably on the inspiration of the Central leadership, implicit or express, was anxious to keep the boundaries of the proposed Punjabi Suba to as small a dimension as possible. The Punjabi Ministers' case was also supported by figures from official record.

The Commission held sittings in camera for several days. It was requested to have an on-the-spot examination of the different areas to find out whether such areas were Punjabi-speaking or not. But the Commission refused. It was not a Commission of experts and taking the 1961 census as basis, it split the State of Punjab into two States—Punjab, Haryana and a big slice went to Himachal Pradesh.

Sources and Notes

1. "Twenty Two Fateful Days" by D.R. Manekar, (Bombay, Manaktalas 1966) p. 144.
2. Ibid. p. 147.
3. "The Tribune", 11th March, 1966.
4. Ibid, 22nd March, 1966.
5. Ibid, 7th May, 1966.
6. "History of the Sikhs" Vol. II by Khushwant Singh, p. 295.

A SIKH HOMELAND IN THE MAKING

XIII

One morning, I happened to be at a friend's farm in village Dhakauli a few days after the publication of the *Commission's* report. I alighted from my car and was on the road to the residential portion of the farm, when my friend met me coming out and told me that I was walking in Haryana State. I walked to the sitting-room and was told that I was in the Punjabi Suba. Kundi village is situated at a stone's throw from the farm. Most of the area of the village belongs to the Punjabis, mainly Sikhs. There is not one individual in the village, whom I ever noted to be Hindi-speaking, and I had often passed through this village on my way to shoot partridges in the adjoining areas, yet Kundi village became a part of the Haryana State. This was the method and mode of adjustment of the boundaries, and the creation of Haryana State. The Report of the Commission declared Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Amritsar, Kapurthala, Jullundur, Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Bhatinda and part of Sangrur district excluding Jind and Narwana tehsils, Patiala district and Rupar tehsil of Ambala district, as parts of Punjabi Suba. The majority of the Commission, by two to one, declared Chandigarh and also Kharar Sub-tehsil of Ambala district to be part of Haryana State, but the minority report in its dissent note, declared it part of Punjabi Suba for the reasons :

(i) According to the census of 1961 the Hindi-speaking population in the Kharar tehsil is no doubt 52.2% but the Punjabi-speaking population in the rural area is 56.2%.

(ii) Under the Sachar formula 1949, Kharar tehsil had

been placed in the Punjabi Region.

(iii) The Hindi population in Chandigarh Capital project is purely migratory having come from Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan for labour only. Therefore, Kharar tehsil and Chandigarh cannot according to the minority report, be considered to be Hindi-speaking and this is an indication that it was mainly the Hindu population of the towns, townships and rural areas that had given their mother-tongue as Hindi having disowned Punjabi, that had inflated the percentage of the Hindi-speaking population.

The minority report was accepted and implemented regarding Kharar tehsil but Chandigarh was declared Union Territory. The findings of the Commission came as a stunning blow to the Sikhs. It was felt, that the Report was based on the premise that the Hindus and Sikhs were two separate peoples, this time theory being imposed by Central Congress leadership. The Punjabi Suba as envisaged in the Commission's recommendations or Punjab State as declared later in the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966, has an area of 50,255 sq. kilometres with population of 1,11,47,054 out of which urban population is 25,63,306 and rural population 85,79,748. Sikh constitute 55% of population, but were able to send 62 Sikhs to the legislative assembly out of 104 members in 1967 General Election, whereas 81 Sikhs were elected in the mid-term elections of February, 1969.

28,261 sq. miles with a population of 14,42,577 of the joint Punjab, comprising the districts of Simla, Kangra, Kulu and Lahaul and also Nalagarh tehsil of Ambala district, Lohara, Amb and Una Kanugo circle of Una tehsil of Hoshiarpur district, the territories in Santokhgarh Kanugo circle of Una tehsil and also some areas in Una tehsil of Hoshiarpur district and territories of Dhar Kalan Kanugo circle of Pathankot tehsil of Gurdaspur district went to Himachal Pradesh. In fact Himachal Pradesh was the biggest gainer in this reorganisation.

The premises on which the Boundary Commission entirely based its findings were the figures of 1961 census. It rejected outright the emphatic plea, at one time admitted by the Prime Minister, that the Hindus had by and large, wrongly given their

mother tongue as Hindi during the census, when, in fact, they spoke Punjabi. The Commission quoted in extenso the figures of the Hindi-speaking population and the Punjabi-speaking population in different areas, and tried to find justification for the rejection of the plea on the ground that these figures slightly differed from the numerical strength of Hindus and Sikhs in those areas, safely forgetting that the false deposition regarding the mother tongue had been more in urban areas and not to that extent in rural areas. No doubt, the Sikhs were 47.6% in population in Jullundur Division according to 1961 census as against 51.36%, who gave their mother tongue as Punjabi, and similarly, whereas the Hindus were 50.2% in Patiala Division as against 41.1% who gave their mother tongue incorrectly as Hindi, but the above figures and the figures quoted by the Commission supported the plea of the Punjabi language protagonists, that whereas the Punjabi Region is entirely Punjabi-speaking, yet a large percentage gave their mother tongue as Hindi because of communal feelings. The Commission while rejecting this plea wrote, "The terms of reference require the Commission to have due regard to the census figures of 1961. It is true that it is not the only factor to be taken into account. But unless the Commission is satisfied that the census figures of 1961 must be untrue, these figures cannot be discarded from consideration as is insisted upon by the protagonists of the Punjabi language. We propose, therefore, to consider the question of adjustment of the boundary in the light of the census figures of 1961 subject to such special infirmities in these figures as may be disclosed in respect of any particular area, and also in the light of other circumstances."

The Commission also rejected another very important plea that all those who had migrated from West Pakistan spoke Punjabi and, as such were Punjabi-speaking, thereby inflating the population of the Punjabi-speaking people. This fact was so obvious and patent that nobody could have controverted it. But the Commission rejected this too, twisting the remarks of Superintendent Census here and there, when it writes in its Report, "Therefore, even according to the Census Superintendent, it is clear that the predominant language of Western

Punjab was not Punjabi but Jatki and Lahandi. That language is, it is reported by Gearson akin to Sindhi and other "Dardi" language, and has only a slight relationship with Punjabi. It would be difficult, therefore, to support the assumption made that every person who migrated from Western Punjab must be Punjabi-speaking, and his migration into India after partition in 1947 must have swelled the ranks of the Punjabi-speaking people."

The surprising part, however, of the findings of the Report related to Chandigarh town. When the Commission was confronted with the facts and figures about the plot-holders in the town, and informed that out of total residential plot-holders numbering 9649 in 1963, the Hindi-speaking persons held only 1202 plots, whereas the Punjabi-speaking persons from Punjabi Region held 2142 plots and those from Chandigarh held 4524 plots, this was also rejected on the frivolous ground that it has not been established that the plot-holders who had given their Chandigarh addresses were Punjabi-speaking. The Commission had been told that it was quite easy to verify that 4524 plot-holders with Chandigarh addresses had got the plots partly against claims of property left in West Pakistan which proved that they were Punjabis, but this was conveniently forgotten. This ground was also rejected, when the Commission was told that out of the commercial plots the Punjabi-speaking people held 1534 out of total 1714 out of which L.I.C. had 128.

Another plea supported by facts and figures, which was rejected, was that 35,000 were seasonal workers migrating from U.P. and Rajasthan doing construction and other works and, as such, could not be considered residents of Chandigarh for the purpose of assessing the Punjabi-speaking population and Hindi-speaking population. It was said, that, "every large town consists of its original population and if people who come from outside to earn their livelihood, whether their vocation be manual work or employment in undertakings or public service, all persons having a fixed abode in the town would be deemed to belong to the town."

The most astounding part of the recommendations was the reliance on the figures from the university, of students who

opted for Hindi or Punjabi as a medium in their examinations, overlooking the basic fact that Hindi being the National language, students would naturally opt for it, to better their career and prospects. The Commission in this regard wrote, "The large percentage of the students who at the examinations from Chandigarh and Kharar Tehsil in the years 1965 and 1966 opted to answer the question papers in the Hindi medium support the inference that the language of the region is predominantly Hindi. From the figures supplied to us we came to know that in 1966 from the schools in Chandigarh town, 1423 students appeared at the Higher Secondary Examination Part I; out of these 1102 opted to answer the question papers in Hindi, 321 in Punjabi. Similarly out of 963 students who appeared at the Higher Secondary Part II Examination; 769 opted for the Hindi medium and 194 for the Punjabi medium. In the middle standard examination held in 1965 in examination centres in Chandigarh, out of 2120 students, 1599 took the examination in the Hindi medium and 541 in the Punjabi medium...."

These were the basis on which it was recommended that Chandigarh was part of Haryana. There could be no greater travesty of justice and fairness when it was safely forgotten that Chandigarh had a position analogous to that of Bombay in the Bombay Presidency when it comprised Maharashtra and Gujarat before the reorganisation of States in 1956. Bombay was a cosmopolitan city which was neither exclusively Gujarati nor Maharashtrian. It had attracted a great variety of people including a large number of Gujaratis. Hence the Reorganisation Commission then was certainly faced with ticklish problems. It could not award Bombay either to Maharashtra or Gujarat and because it could not resolve this dilemma, the Commission decided to deny both the regions, Maharashtra and Gujarat the status of separate statehood. But when it came to the reorganisation in 1960, when the Union Government was compelled to concede under pressure the demand for a separate Gujarat and Maharashtra it did not insist on Bombay being made a Union Territory as it was done in the case of Chandigarh, but was handed over to Maharashtra. The site

of Chandigarh being in Kharar tehsil was a part of the Punjabi region and as such should have gone to the Punjab State. It had been made bilingual as a tentative arrangement only as it was a capital of both the regions. The Commission was basically wrong in recommending its inclusion by a majority vote in the Haryana region, and the Union Government was further wrong in declaring it a Union Territory.

At the time of the publication of the Report, Sant Fateh Singh was not in India. He had come out of the Akal Takhat on May 12, 1966, 277 days after his pledge on August 15, 1965, that he would not stir out without obtaining the Punjabi Suba. In his press conference then, he declared, "That Hindi had nothing to fear from Punjabi" and had added, "I would like to stress that Punjabi would be the State language and Hindi would be given the same place in Punjabi Suba as is given to it in other non Hindi-speaking States. Hindi being a national language, would take the place of English. We will try to learn Hindi along with Punjabi." Thereafter, he left for England on the invitation of the Sikhs residing there.

The reaction of the Akali Dal was extremely distressing and painful. Gurnam Singh, speaking at a Conference organised by the Sant Akali Dal, said that the "Communal minded Congress Government have tried to do damage to the Punjabi Suba." The Working Committee of the Sant Akali Dal in a resolution warned the Government that the Punjabis would not tolerate Chandigarh going out of the Punjabi Suba because it was purely a Punjabi-speaking city and it would be unfair and unjust to the Punjabis to make it a Union Territory. The resolution conveyed its considered views that linguistic principles had been totally ignored by the Boundary Commission, and that the approach in the recommendations was purely communal. Therefore, it urged on the Government of India not to implement the communal report. The resolution further reiterated that the Akali Dal had always stood for a Punjabi Suba based on language and had, therefore, rejected the 1961 census as a basis for the reorganisation of Punjab, and further stated, "But the Commission in its report has recommended that Chandigarh, Kharar tehsil, parts of Nalagarh, Una, Ambala,

Fatehabad and Sirsa tehsil, Guhla and Tohana sub-tehsils be included in the Haryana region when these areas are purely Punjabi-speaking areas. The Commission has proved itself to be the worst type of communal Commission." The Akali Dal Working Committee further warned the Government that the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission were pregnant with serious consequences, for which the responsibility would lie with the Government. The Working Committee of the Sant Akali Dal demanded, therefore, that other areas which had been excluded be also declared Punjabi-speaking and included in the proposed Punjabi Suba.

Sant Fateh Singh giving a statement to the press on his return from his foreign tour said, "The Punjab Boundary Commission Report smacks of communalism" and declared that "Chandigarh at no cost will be allowed to remain out of Punjabi Suba." A similar stand was taken by Master Tara Singh. He, speaking at Patiala on September 14, 1966, in an Akali Conference said that the new Punjabi Suba was yet another move to enslave the Sikhs.

A formal meeting of the Congress Parliamentary party on June 8, 1966 immediately after the publication of the Report conveyed the consensus of views that the Report of the Boundary Commission be accepted in toto. Most of the members who attended the meeting were of the view that if the Shah Commission Report was not accepted in toto it was likely to reopen other questions and lead to complications. Among those who were reported to have participated in the discussion from Punjab were Amar Nath Vidyalankar, Raghbir Singh Panj hazari, Dr. Anoop Singh and Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafar. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, appealed for a fair trial to the Report. She said that the Government had accepted the recommendations. The only major difference related to Chandigarh. On this the Commission was divided, therefore the Government decided on a via media. This might not be, she said, an ideal arrangement but given a measure of good will by all sides it did offer a workable solution. Punjab and Haryana had so much in common that a common capital would assist in the development of co-operative relations. In

the initial period this would certainly be invaluable.

Ram Kishan's Ministry resigned on June 2, 1966, paving the way for promulgation of the President's rule. This step was taken presumably to satisfy the public opinion in Haryana which demanded, "impartial administration" in Punjab for the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission. Governor Ujjal Singh was also asked to resign, and was appointed to officiate as Governor of Madras for the period when the Governor there was on leave. Dharam Vira was sworn as Governor of Punjab on June 27, 1966. The removal of Ujjal Singh had a very unhealthy impact on the Sikhs, giving them the impression of a lack of confidence of the Central leadership even in the Sikh Governor.

The exclusion of Chandigarh and Punjabi-speaking areas from the proposed Punjabi State was a very serious issue. More serious was the advised exclusion of the control of the water and power sources from the Government of the New Punjabi State. These issues are bound to remain in the forefront hereafter. Sant Fateh Singh while giving a press interview on July 27 said, "I am satisfied with the formation of Punjabi Suba but not with its form. I did not expect the exclusion of Chandigarh and some other Punjabi-speaking areas, like Sirsa, part of Fatehabad, parts of Karnal and Ambala, certain villages of Nalagarh, 19 or 20 villages of Kangra close to Pathankot and Dalhousie from the Punjabi speaking State. All these are Punjabi speaking areas. The proposed Punjabi Suba will become lame without these areas. I will endeavour to get these areas for the Punjabi Suba." He, however, ruled out any agitation being started immediately for the inclusion of these areas in Punjabi Suba and suggested negotiations. The Sant Akali Dal appointed a nine-man Committee with Sant Chanan Singh, President of the S.G.P.C. as Chairman, Gurnam Singh, Lachman Singh Gill, Narinder Singh, Uttam Singh Duggal, Harcharan Singh Hudhara, Parkash Singh Badal, Surinder Nath Khosla and Gurcharan Singh Taura as members to negotiate and hold talks with Haryana and Himachal Pradesh leaders in a bid to solve the problem peacefully. When asked whether he would take any other step, he said he did not personally

visualise such a step, but that it was for the Working Committee to decide later, if these negotiations failed. He, at the same time, rejected Master Tara Singh's demand for self-determined political status of the Sikhs in the new Punjabi State adding, "I am definitely opposed to Master Tara Singh's demand for independent Sikh State or for self-determined political status of the Sikhs. Our demand has been Punjabi Suba as part of India. Bharat is my country and each particle of this land is sacred to me. How can we leave our home?"

The Punjab Reorganisation Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on September 3, 1966. The point of view of the New Sikh leadership that had sponsored and supported the Sikh Homeland move in 1965 was put forward in the Lok Sabha debate by Kapur Singh, formerly an I.C.S. Officer. He declared his opposition to the bill on behalf of the Shiromani Akali Dal (Master Group) and gave three reasons for it: "Firstly, it is conceived in sin, secondly, it has been delivered by an incompetent and untrained midwife, and thirdly, it is opposed to the best interests of the nation as it will almost certainly lead to a weakening of National Integration and loss of faith in the integrity of those who exercise political power in the Country." Explaining how the bill had been conceived in sin he referred to callous betrayal of the Sikhs "By those whose flesh of flesh and bone of bones the Sikhs are, and whose ancestors—Common ancestors of the betrayed and betrayers, both—had upheld the highest and noblest notions and standard of ethical conduct in respect of the subject of keeping faith with fellow men and redeeming promises solemnly made." Enumerating and elucidating the aspect of betrayal, he referred to the promise given by the Congress leaders in 1929 that no constitution would be framed by the majority community unless it was freely acceptable to the Sikhs after India achieved political freedom; and also to the outright rejection by the Sikhs of all offers and proposals made to them by the British and Muslims proposing to accord the Sikhs a sovereign or autonomous status in the areas constituting their ancestors' Homeland between the river Ghagar and the river Chenab. He recalled when Sardar Bahadur Shivdev Singh, then a member of Secretary of State

Council for India, made an informal proposal to the Sikhs on behalf of the British authorities in 1932 that if they disassociate themselves from the Congress movement, "They would be given a decisive political weightage in the Punjab as would lead to their emerging as a third independent element in India after the British transfer of power to the inhabitants of the sub-continent", but Master Tara Singh rejected this tempting offer out right. Dealing further, he referred to the assurance given by Pandit Nehru on the 6th July, 1946, in a press conference when he had said, "The brave Sikhs of Punjab are entitled to special consideration. I see no wrong in an area and a set-up in the North wherein the Sikhs can also experience the glow of freedom." He disclosed that, "In the early winter of 1946 the Cabinet Mission while at Delhi, communicated to the Sikhs through the late Sardar Baldev Singh that if the Sikhs are determined not to part company with Hindu India, the British Parliament, in their solicitude for the Sikh people, was prepared to so frame the Independence Act of India, that in respect of Sikh Homeland, where-ever these areas might eventually go, in Pakistan or India, no constitution shall be framed such as does not have the concurrence of the Sikhs. But Sardar Baldev Singh in consultation with the Congress leaders summarily rejected this offer which went beyond the assurance given by the majority community in 1929 and in 1946 by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru in Calcutta." He also disclosed in his speech that in April 1947 an offer was made by Jinnah in consultation with most of the powerful leaders of the British Cabinet in London through Master Tara Singh, and then through the Maharaja of Patiala, of a sovereign Sikh State comprising areas lying to the West of Panipat and to the East of the left bank of the Ravi River on the understanding that this State would confederate with Pakistan on advantageous terms to the Sikhs. This again was rejected by Master Tara Singh. He further divulged that the British Cabinet leader conveyed to Baldev Singh during his visit to London in December, 1946, that if he stayed behind, arrangement might be made, "So as to enable the Sikhs to have political feet of their own on which they may walk into the current of world history," but Baldev Singh conveyed this to

Jawahar Lal Nehru and gave the following statement to the press. "The Sikhs have no demand to make on the British, except the demand that they should quit India. Whatever political rights and aspirations the Sikhs have, they shall have satisfied through the good will of the Congress and the majority community." He also referred to the unanimous resolution of the Hindu and Sikh members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly in the month of July 1946 at Delhi favouring partition when it was stated: "In the divided Indian Punjab, special constitutional measures are imperative to meet the just aspirations and rights of the Sikhs." Therefore the Bill, according to Kapur Sing M.P. was "a calculated forged link in the chain" of the sordid story of gross betrayal of the Sikhs by the Congress leadership.

The Bill was passed on September 7, 1966, and became an Act on the President's assent on September 18, 1966, providing for the creation of the two States of Punjab and Haryana from November 1, 1966. That, however, provided that there would be a common High Court for both the States, and that the State Electricity Board, the State Housing Corporation, the Punjab State Financial Corporation and other corporations of the kind would function jointly as previously, subject to the directions issued from time to time by the Central Government. The Home Minister had said when piloting the bill that the two new States would be free to decide the future of the High Court in the light of the experience of its working and other corporations, though joint at the initial stage, would be divided later by the two new States. The most tragic and unfortunate provision in the Punjab Reorganisation Act 1966 was whereby the Central Government took over the control of the Bhakra Dam and reservoir and works appertenant thereto, Nangal Dam and Nangal Hydral Channel and Kotla Power House, the Irrigation Head Works at Rupar, Harika and Ferozepore, Bhakra Power Houses, Ganguwal and Kotla power houses through the Bhakra Managing Board, and also the Beas Project, including the Beas Sutlej Link Project, and the Pong Dam project and connected power houses. These provisions took all the power resources as well as the water resources

of the New State of Punjab from the control of the Government and administration of the New Punjab, which was to have such a control, being the successor Government of the area in which these projects are situated. There could be no greater discrimination than this, in according a treatment to the New State, which reflected suspicion about the loyalty and bonafide of the new administration.

There was a general feeling amongst the Sikhs that great injustice had been done, and the entire Sikh press took a very serious view of the basis on which the two new States had been formed. The exclusion of Chandigarh from the Punjab State, and the taking over of the control of the two projects, Bhakra Dam project and Beas Dam project, by the Central Government, was not only considered unprecedented but most unjust and unfair and as such discriminatory. Sant Fateh Singh on his return from foreign tour announced on November 5, 1966, that he would announce his programme on November 12, 1966. He expressed his regret that negotiations with Haryana leaders had broken down, and that he would have to take some steps to undo the injustice that had been done to the Punjab. He said that he had given an ultimatum to the Government that he would wait till November 12, for the abolition of the common links between the two States, restoration of the control over the power and water sources and inclusion of the Punjabi-speaking areas and Chandigarh in the Punjabi Suba. He called a conference of representatives of several parties including the Communists, the Swatantra Party, the Republican Party, and the S.S.P. on November 10, 1966, wherein the representatives promised to give full support in the contemplated agitation for abolition of common links and inclusion of the Punjabi-speaking areas and Chandigarh in Punjab, and restoration of the control of water and power sources. The Jan Sangh did not join in these deliberations.

Sant Fateh Singh announced on November 10, 1966, that he would send Jathas from Gurdwara Manji Sahib to Chandigarh to press these demands. Giving reasons for this, he said that he wanted to give more time to the Union Government to consider these demands adding, "If the Union Government

adopts daily-dallying tactics in accepting my demands, I shall announce my next programme for the achievement of my objective very shortly." Reading out his prepared speech, he said that the Punjabis, and particularly the Sikhs, wanted to live in the country, with respect and honour. He also said that he was prepared to sacrifice his life for the cause of the Punjabis, and appealed seeking the cooperation of all the political parties of the State because Punjab was common to all and should be enjoyed by all. The Akali Dal Working Committee met on November 16, 1966, appointed Sant Fateh Singh dictator, authorising him to announce a morcha or any step that he thought proper for securing the abolition of the common links and inclusion of the Punjabi-speaking areas in Punjab including Chandigarh, and getting the control of water and power projects for the Punjab. It was also announced that a procession would start from Gurdwara Manji Sahib in the Golden Temple, diverge in different directions, tour the villages on the way, educating the people towards an agitational approach, and ultimately meeting at Chandigarh to press the demands. Accordingly, a Jatha of 75 Akalis started on their march, dividing themselves into three different groups, taking different routes, each group led by different leaders. Jathedar Mohan Singh Tur was selected the over-all leader. Sant Fateh Singh, in a speech to the Jatha traced the history of the Punjabi Suba movement, charging the Union Government and the Central Congress leadership with yielding to communal pressure and backing out of its original assurance regarding the formation of Punjabi Suba. He said that the Jatha had been instructed to remain peaceful, and had directions as to what to do on its arrival at Chandigarh. The three Jathas were, however, arrested before they could reach Chandigarh, and it was announced on November 25, 1966, that no more Jathas would be sent.

Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafar had by that time been elected a leader of the Congress legislature party, and had assumed the office of Chief Minister, and his Ministry of 31 members had taken over the administration. He declared on November 14, 1966 that the agitational approach made by the

Sant Akali Dal would be faced firmly. The Punjab Cabinet, however, decided on December 1, 1966, to bifurcate the Electricity Board and to disrupt all the common links which were under their jurisdiction. The Government of India also announced that it had kept an open mind on the future of the capital at Chandigarh as that of one or both the States, but common links and the retention of it was not going to disturb the settled decision about the boundaries of Punjab and the status of Chandigarh as Union Territory. The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, also wrote a letter to Sant Fateh Singh on the same lines.

The Working Committee of the Akali Dal announced its decision to observe December 12, as protest day in its meeting of December 5, 1966, directing the Sikhs to wear black badges and observe complete hartal. Sant Fateh Singh announced his decision to go on fast unto death at the Akal Takhat from December 17, 1966, and commit self-immolation on December 27, at the same place if he survived the fast. This decision was announced at a largely attended Sikh Diwan held at Manji Sahib. Reading from a written script, he traced the history of the Punjabi Suba, and said, "Though Shastri and Nanda were convinced of the justness of the demand (Punjabi Suba), yet they refused to concede it and this culminated in my resolution to go on fast unto death as a prelude to self-immolation on September 25, 1965, last year. The schedule had to be changed for certain reasons, but ultimately the Government accepted the demand, and the Parliament had enacted the formation of the Punjabi Suba." He said that he regretted very much that the Central Congress leadership, particularly, the then Home Minister Nanda, had again shown discrimination in basing the adjustment of boundaries on the 1961 census. This showed a lack of confidence in them, by depriving Punjab of important Punjabi-speaking areas. He declared that he wanted a State on a purely linguistic basis, whereas now the Sikhs had been circumscribed and limited to their homeland. He complained that the Union Government had further exhibited extreme discrimination by keeping common links between the two States, taking away important

areas, and retaining control over certain important projects which should belong to Punjab. He was, however, glad that all the political parties including the State Congress, had given support to his demand for the abolition of common links and inclusion of Punjabi-speaking areas in Punjab including Chandigarh. He also regretted that his efforts to get justice through negotiations had failed, and that the Government had adopted a perverse attitude and had held out threats to suppress the Sikhs. Therefore, he had no other recourse but to fast unto death, and to immolate himself if he survived a ten-day fast, to prick the conscience of the Rulers. Explaining his reasons for choosing 17th December as the date for beginning the fast and 27th December for self-immolation, he said that these dates coincided with the dates on which Guru Teg Babadur, the 9th Guru was executed by the Mughals at Delhi, and when two Sahibzadas were bricked up alive at Sirhand respectively.

This announcement created a commotion amongst the Sikhs and brought the issue to the forefront. Master Tara Singh, giving a statement in the press soon after, supported Sant Fateh Singh in his programme and said, "I am in agreement with the Sant's demand for the abolition of common links and the inclusion of Punjabi-speaking areas in Punjab besides Chandigarh and the Dam projects. In fact, I go a step further and demand an autonomous status for Punjab in order to provide a real Homeland for the Sikhs." Giani Bhu-pinder Singh, the then President of Master Tara Singh's Akali Dal, while addressing the 17th All-India Conference held in those days said, "that this communal and narrow-minded Government will never treat us as equals. We should understand clearly that there is no place for justice and equality for us in this country. Hence our lives, honour, property and even our religion are in danger," and added, "we shall have to firmly decide, whether we have to live in Punjab as rulers or slaves."

Home Minister Y. B. Chavan appealed to Sant Fateh Singh on December 8, 1966, to reconsider his demand, and expressed the Central Government's readiness to concede a

separate Governor, a separate High Court, but made it clear that the Union Government was unable to accept any claim for readjustment of reorganised territories unless at any time in the future, all the parties concerned evolved mutually agreed solution. The Prime Minister also sent a message to Sant Fateh Singh inviting him to meet her. This invitation was declined. A proposal was also made for a referendum in the areas claimed to be Punjabi-speaking, but this was rejected by Sant Fateh Singh, who declared that this method had not been resorted to during the creation of other linguistic States, and there was no reason why it should be applied to Punjab. He said that his demand was just because these areas were in fact Punjabi-speaking as it was obvious from the language that the people spoke there. The claim of Sant Fateh Singh found justification in the mid-term election later in Haryana, when the Dhabwali area of Sirsa tehsil returned an Akali candidate by overwhelming majority to the Haryana Vidhan Sabha.

The Haryana Government, however, took a stiff stand on the issue. The Chief Minister, Haryana then in a statement in Haryana Vidhan Sabha said on December 9, 1966, that he was determined that the areas belonging to Haryana on the basis of the Boundary Commission Report would not be allowed to go out of it, come what might. He even declared that he would resign if it was done. The situation became very tense with the pronouncement of Sant Fateh Singh, and it was felt that some solution must be found to avoid the fast. Jai Parkash Narain accompanied by J. J. Singh reached Amritsar on 15th December, where he had an interview with the Akali leader. On his return to Delhi, he met the Home Minister and in a statement to the press, said, "I am happy to say that our talks, which centred round the proposal put forward by me, were most cordial but it would not serve the cause of an amicable settlement if I say anything more at this stage." It was also reported in the press that a letter from the Prime Minister was brought by a special plane on December 16, 1966, making a last-minute appeal to the Akali leader to desist from his fast.

The Punjab Government had already announced their determination to face the situation and adopt all means to suppress the agitation. The Defence Minister, Swaran Singh, and Chief Minister Giani Gurmukh Singh, felt it necessary to give a joint statement at Chandigarh on December 16, 1966, that the Government was not prepared to accept the 'unreasonable' demand of Sant Fateh Singh or to yield to his threats.

Sant Fateh Singh went ceremoniously on fast unto death at 11 A. M. on the 17th December on the third floor of the holy Akal Takhat as a preliminary to his proposed self-immolation on December 27, 1966. Just before going on fast, he made a twelve-minute speech from the base of the Akal Takhat and broke down at the close of it. He declared, "I want to make it clear that my programme of self-immolation will be halted only if the Government accepts these demands, namely :

(i) Abolition of common links ;

(ii) Return of Chandigarh and Dam projects held by the Central Government ; and

(iii) Inclusion of the Punjabi-speaking areas."

He said during his speech, that he would sip only lime water and concluded his speech thus, "I most humbly appeal to the people to remain peaceful and nonviolent. We have not to damage our country in our struggle with the Government. . . . I am a patriot and a true custodian of my country of which every particle is equally mine. We have made sacrifices for her sake and in her service. We have inherited the fight against such discriminations and these leaders had shown the way. Martyrs light the lamp of the nation with their own blood and many martyrs are born out such sacrifices. I am taking a big step, and I do think that this sacrifice will bring success to our cause. I am a humble servant of Guru Gobind Singh, and have made up my mind to sacrifice my life against this discrimination. The Punjabi Suba is dearer to me than my life. The world knows with what sacrifices and struggle, we have obtained it. A great injustice has been done to it. I have demanded the same rights for the Suba administration as were allowed to other States, and the same status for the language as enjoyed in other areas. It is a matter

of regret that during the reorganisation, many of the rights have been snatched away. How can I bear such a great injustice? For this reason I am sacrificing my life and consigning myself to the flames on December 27, 1966." He declared further, "From the flames of my pyre will blow the slogans of Hindu-Sikh unity. I am not opposed to any faith, and I am a well-wisher of all faiths. They constitute my family. I appeal to the Sikhs to remove misunderstandings amongst themselves and remain united."

Sant Fateh Singh received another letter from the Prime Minister on December 23, 1966, to which he gave the reply on the same day, refuting the charge that he had undertaken the fast as a threat. He said that there was no question of holding out any threat, for he had given enough time to the Government to reconsider the decision on the just demand of the Punjabis and had undertaken this course only when no other course was left open to him. He regretted his inability to alter the decision unless his demands were accepted. He sent the following telegram also in reply to the appeal of President Radhakrishnan to give up his fast :

"Grateful to you for your loving sentiments. Have always been anxious and cooperative for the solution of country's difficult problems. I mean no threat to your Government. Our demands are based on truth and justice. Take the matter in your own hands and mould your Government to take the path of justice without fear or favour. Regret inability to alter decision till truth prevails and justice is secured."

All efforts were being made by public men at Delhi to save the Sant's life. Hukam Singh and Gurmukh Singh Musafar reached Amritsar on December 21, 1966, and it was reported that they were unable to persuade Sant Fateh Singh to accept any compromise formula. Their assessment of the situation was that the initiative had gone into the hands of the extremist elements, and it was doubtful if the moderate Akalis could save the situation. The Punjab Government had by that time arrested 1927 prominent Sikhs, and troops were made to march through the streets of Amritsar on the Christmas day to exhibit to the people the power and majesty of the Central Govern-

received an assurance that their demands for which he went on fast would be met. He said, "I made three demands :

(i) An announcement of the rupture of the common links with Haryana, which has already been made.

(ii) The question of merging the left-out areas will be decided by a Committee of experts.

(iii) Chandigarh, Bhakra and allied issues should go to the Prime Minister for arbitration."

Asked, how he could say that Mrs. Gandhi's verdict would go in his favour, he referred to her statement which she had made earlier in regard to Chandigarh and said, "Secondly, S. Hukam Singh had given almost a solemn assurance from the Akal Takhat, that Chandigarh would go to Punjab." He also referred to some written commitment, but refused to disclose it, adding that it was full and complete. Akali quarters claimed that Hukam Singh during his conversation had given a definite assurance on behalf of the Prime Minister that she would decide the issue of Chandigarh in favour of Punjab. Hukam Singh remained silent for some time in spite of the claims by the Akali leaders about the assurance given by him, but later he stated that he had given assurances on his own behalf, which he was ready to repeat, but denied that he had carried any assurance from the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister too denied on January 8, 1967, that she had given any assurance of the nature claimed by the Akali leaders, but said that she had agreed to take up the arbitration. It seemed, in the words of the Sikh savant, that "the Sikhs shall have to march on."

This chapter in the Sikh struggle for their objective has indeed been sad and sordid. What had transpired in the talks between the two, Sant Fateh Singh and Hukam Singh, and what assurances were conveyed by the later, and under what circumstances the intended self-immolation was given up, are events too recent for a dispassionate approach and are for research by a historian. There is, however, no gain saying the fact, that assurances were conveyed on behalf of the Central Government, which induced Sant Fateh Singh and his colleagues to come to the conclusion, that a sacrifice of the nature

was not called for under the circumstances. At the time, no doubt, Gurnam Singh's arrest was taken as an index of the fact that no assurance had been given. Gurnam Singh was certainly against the giving up of the fast, considering the earlier assurances not sufficient. He was arrested thereafter, and was not present at the time of the arrival of Hukam Singh. But this cannot be taken as a decisive factor for the conclusion that no assurance was given about Chandigarh. The very fact that the appointment of the Commission for the left-out Punjabi-speaking areas was conceded and that arbitration was assured in regard to Chandigarh could be taken as a reconsideration of the matter in the light of the previous background. The possibility of an assurance having been given that Chandigarh would be handed over by this stratagem cannot be ruled out. It was not necessary, that there should have been an undertaking of an early surrender of Chandigarh to the New Punjab. The very fact that Sant Fateh Singh reiterated this stand, again and again, and even on the 54th day of fast unto death of Darshan Singh Pheruman, the Sawatantra Party leader, and an octogenarian, bears out that there was an assurance given by Hukam Singh. Sant Fateh Singh in a statement to the press on October 9, 1969, said, "I have always tried to solve the most serious problems through talks in an atmosphere of love and goodwill. It has become part and parcel of my life. The agitation of 1966 was a testimony to what I say. At that crucial moment, relying on the Prime Minister's assurance conveyed to me through Mr. Hukam Singh, now Governor of Rajasthan, I had to defer my struggle. For three long years, I and the whole of the Punjab have waited in vain for the implementation of those assurances."¹

Shiromani Akali Dal entered the arena of general elections in 1967 in the background of the fast. The conditions were not favourable for the Akali Dal. The National Congress was the ruling party and could take credit for having conceded the demand for Punjabi Suba. The Suba might not have been of the choice of the Akali Dal but it could not be denied either, that some of the leaders did at times demand

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that the Punjabi region be converted into a Punjabi Suba with an eye to the Sikh majority in such area. And this demand had been conceded. The issue of Chandigarh and other left-out areas claimed to be Punjabi-speaking and allied questions had certainly come to the forefront, but the attitude of the Congress leadership in this regard could not be said to be unsympathetic, as the matter had been allowed to be reopened during the negotiations with Sant Fateh Singh at the time of his fast. Sant Fateh Singh had expressed satisfaction at this attitude, and had given up the fast as well as the self-immolation. Therefore, the Akali Dal entered the General Elections with no political objectives and no slogan either. Nor had it formulated an economic programme as such. Its manifesto was full of platitudes. The Akali Dal stood split into two groups, both headed by leaders of stature. All efforts to bring about a compromise or electoral adjustment had failed. Master Tara Singh's group, had no doubt, given the slogan of "self-determined political status of the Sikhs within the Indian Union", but it was a vague phrase without a definite objective. The formation of the Punjabi Suba had created a panic amongst certain sections of the Hindus who were naturally opposed to the Akali Dal, and as such had aligned themselves with the parties that were determined to defeat the working of the Punjabi Suba. It was in such circumstances that both the groups of the Akali Dal were able to secure 26 seats out of 104 with 24.69% of the total votes polled in their favour. The most significant outcome of the General Elections was that it became apparent, that the Sikh homeland slogan did not cut much ice with the Sikh masses as Kapur Singh, the sponsor of this slogan, lost even his security in the Parliamentary election in Ludhiana constituency, the stronghold of the Akalis.

The Congress legislative party did not emerge as the majority party either, and disunity in its ranks on the leadership issue enabled the Akali Dal legislative party of 26 to form a coalition of splinter groups and parties in a United Front and get some defectors from the Congress, thus gaining a majority which enabled it to form the Ministry. It was a

shrewd and clever move to coalesce the different groups. There was not only a diversity in the ideologies and objectives of the different groups, but there were contradictions also and it was indeed a phenomenon, that these different groups marched into a United Front to run the administration. It was obvious that such an arrangement would not last long. But it removed the impression from the mind of the man in the street, that it was only the Congress party that had the monopoly to run the administration. The impression gained ground that other parties also with diverse ideologies could wrest power from it. The Congress Legislative Party suffered because of the anti-Sikh phobia in the Central leaders. This was divulged later by Gian Singh Rarewala when he resigned from the Congress on the eve of the mid term poll in 1969, disclosing in a statement to the press : "Then came the General Elections of 1967 and the emergence of the Congress legislative party without majority. There were certainly factions and groups but the Central leadership was indecisive and vacillating about my becoming a leader, for they could not expect me to play the stooge. I was allowed to be elected as a leader when it became inevitable. I was not given confidence still." This was the mental background of the Central Congress leadership about the Sikhs.

The United Front Ministry embarked on the administration of the Punjab with its ten-point programme, viz :—

(i) Amity between various communities will be the hallmark of the policies of the United Front ;

(ii) The United Front will ensure clean and efficient administration and reduction in the heavy administrative structure.

(iii) The inclusion of Chandigarh, Bhakra and other projects and other Punjabi-speaking left out areas will be the objective.

(iv) Hindi will be recognised as the link language with the Centre and English will be replaced by Hindi.

(v) Efforts will be made to revolutionise agriculture and industry and make them as a base of the economy of the State.

(vi) The United Front will ensure maximum production of electricity to give full aid to agricultural and industrial output.

(vii) Industrial development will be encouraged.

(viii) The tax structure will be re-examined with a view to eliminate inequitable burdens.

(ix) Special steps would be taken for bettering the lot of the scheduled castes.

(x) The welfare of ex-servicemen who constitute a sizable part of the population will be kept in view."

This minimum programme adopted by the United Front was certainly attractive and an intelligent adjustment evolved out of the different ideologies in the political field, but it could not give the front any roots in the masses. It was for this reason that this marriage of convenience of parties did not last long and defections ensued soon. Besides, the Central Congress leadership was bent upon disrupting the Sikh solidarity by all possible means, and in Lachhman Singh Gill, they found a handy instrument for that objective. Lachhman Singh Gill had been able to secure a group of 17 to defect and constitute a minority ministry with the Congress in its support. The Congress move may have been a clever political device to defeat the United Front Ministry, but its impact on the Sikh masses was that the Congress leadership would not allow the Sikhs exclusive power or an important share in the administration of the State. This impression proved helpful in the mid-term poll, that followed later in 1969.

Congress support to a minority ministry of defectors had been unheard of in the recent political history, both from the ethical and from the power aspect in politics. Yet, open and shameless support was given to this Ministry for nearly 6 months, till the public opinion compelled the Congress to withdraw the support. The fact that several opportunities were not captured to seize power by the Congress by defeating the minority Ministry was for the reason that, there was lack of confidence in the then leader of the Congress legislature party, Gian Singh Rarewala, who was not considered ultra loyal to the Congress as he could not be expected to act as a stooge for

the Central leadership. The statement of Gian Singh Rarewala in this connection on his resignation on the eve of the mid-term poll in November 1968 throws a flood of light on the policies of the Congress leadership about the Sikhs. He disclosed :

"As a leader of the party, I acted sincerely and zealously to strengthen it and make it strong when time came. However, when the time did come, a few defectors were made to form the Ministry with the support of the Congress. What motivated this has been beyond my comprehension, unless it be that a handy handle was found in an attempt to crush the Sikh leadership. I protested and continued doing so till public opinion compelled the Congress High Command to withdraw its support to the minority Government. The Congress Assembly Party under my leadership had a clear majority with support from Sikh quarters, but this was not allowed, possibly because of Congress averseness to Sikh support even if it be in the organisation. President's rule was promulgated, with mid-term elections as the consequence."

The withdrawal of support to the minority Ministry by the Congress party under the pressure of public opinion, as stated earlier, resulted in the mid-term elections of 1969. The Congress policy to keep the Sikhs out of power made the Akali leadership realize that they could not capture or retain power unless they brought about unity in their ranks. Therefore, the Sant group thereafter made all efforts to bring in unity and agreement between the two groups, but this could only be possible if adjustment could be made on the Sikh homeland slogan given by Tara Singh's group. It was in such circumstances that a Akali Conference was held at Batala on September 30, 1968, where the steps taken by Sant Fateh Singh, "to constitute a committee to bring about Panthik unity" were approved, but the most important resolution was the second one, which conveyed the trend of Sikh politics in Punjab and which gave a new slogan for the future, particularly for the mid-term elections which were expected. The Resolution was :

"This conference of Shiromani Akali Dal strongly feels that

great changes have come in the political field of the country during the last 10 years and, as such, new considerations have cropped up, necessitating reconsideration of the State-Central relationship under the changed conditions. Many non-Congress Governments have come in several States of the country, and the Congress party in power has abused the Constitution to the detriment of the non-Congress Governments, and uses its power for its party interest. Therefore, it has become necessary in the light of the experience gained that the Constitution of Bharat should be reconsidered and changes made in the States-Central relationship to fit in with new conditions.

"The Shiromani Akali Dal demands that the Constitution of India should be on a correct federal basis and that the States should have greater autonomy. The Shiromani Akali Dal feels that the Central Government's interference in the internal affairs of the States, and the obstacles it places in the proper functioning of the State machinery, are detrimental to the unity and the integrity of the country; therefore, where this conference demands of the Central Government that necessary changes should be brought in the Constitution, there it also appeals to the State Governments to raise their voice to protect and safeguard their rights so that the country may be able to go smoothly on the federal system and progress by maintaining unity and entity."

This approach, in fact, was the correct approach to counter the slogan of "self-determined political status of the Sikhs in the united India" and in consonance with the demand of several non-Hindi States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and others who had suffered at the hands of Hindi dominance. With this slogan in the political field, and Panthic Unity in the domestic field, the Shiromani Akali Dal entered the arena of the mid-term elections of February, 1969. The Akali leadership played a very shrewd and intelligent move in taking advantage of the background of the United Front Party and entering into electoral alliance with the Jan Sangh and other splinter groups on most of the seats. There was appreciation of the fact that it had always been the minority vote that had eroded the position of the majority. The Akali

Dal candidates had secured only 24.69% of the total votes polled in the General Election of 1967 but got only 26 seats, whereas the Congress was able to capture 48 seats polling only 37.46% of the total votes. This was an indication that the opposition of the Hindu minority in Punjab and the split in the Akali ranks was responsible for not securing substantial number of seats in the General Elections in 1967. Taking a lesson from this experience, all efforts were made to give a direct fight to the Congress in the mid-term elections in most of the constituencies. The electoral alliance with the Jan Sangh and the background of the United Front Ministry earlier, had given another advantage to the Akali Dal. It had brought in a sense of political stability to the State, inasmuch as it inducted a confidence in the Hindu masses, that the Punjabi Suba did not mean any harm to the Hindu interests in the State. The sharing of the power by the Jan Sangh with the Akali Dal soon after the formation of Punjabi Suba was a factor that went a great way to bring that confidence to the Hindu mind. More particularly, the entrusting of the portfolio of Industries to the Jan Sangh Minister brought in industrial stability in the State. This unity between the Jan Sangh and the Akali Dal—no doubt at some cost to the Akali Dal and in deviation from its stand in many aspects—should have been welcomed by the Congress leadership since it was in accordance with their principles and policies of emotional integration and the building up of one Nation, yet the Congress called it, "an unholy alliance". The most unfortunate aspect was that Congress leaders, even the top leaders like Morarji Desai, the then Deputy Prime Minister, and Chief Minister Sukhadia said in their speeches during the election campaign that the Akali Dal stood for Sikh theocratic State and to bring it into power in Punjab would endanger the Hindu position, when they should have known that the emphasis of Sant Fateh Singh had always been on Hindu-Sikh unity and the secular set-up in the State. Nevertheless, Morarji Desai speaking at Rupar on February 6, 1969, lashed out at the Jan Sangh and Akali Dal naming their alliance unholy, and stating that the Akalis were demanding a Sikh State and the Jan Sangh stood

for Hindu Raj."²

How the then Deputy Prime Minister could make such an irresponsible statement is beyond one's comprehension. In any case, it was indicative of the way in which Congress big guns looked upon the ideology of the Akali Dal. Addressing a Jan Sangh sponsored public meeting at Patiala on February 21, 1969, Krishan Lal, Finance Minister, accused the then Deputy Prime Minister of preaching communalism in Punjab during the mid-term poll and said that they had a taperecording of his communal utterances which would be played in the Lok Sabha by the Akali and Jan Sangh representatives.³ Those high-ups in the Congress should also have been aware that the Akali Dal could have bettered its position, had it put up more candidates of its own but it showed liberalism in accommodating other parties to the maximum extent. The ultimate result of the mid-term poll was that where the Akali Dal captured 42 seats with two independents supporting it out of 104, 81 seats were won by the Sikhs—no doubt belonging to different parties. This is indicative of the factual and political position that, hereafter, Sikhs would dominate the legislature and the percentage of the Sikhs therein would be more than what it reflects in the population of the State.

The Akali Dal Legislative Assembly Party elected Gurnam Singh as its leader in February, 1969. He then formed the Ministry in coalition with the State Jan Sangh Party. The Akali Dal Party had emerged as the single largest party in the Assembly, with a strength of 42 members and the support of 2 independent members and 5 members belonging to the Communist Party of India and the Marxist group, and thus could form a purely Akali Ministry. The Akali High Command, however, rightly considered it advisable to have a coalition with the Jan Sangh to prove that it was particular about Hindu-Sikh unity.

The Cabinet decided on July 2, 1969, to scrap both the Sachhar Formula and the Pepsu Formula, and to introduce the All-India Formula, designated as the Three-language Formula, with Punjabi as the first compulsory language. No sooner was this decision taken, than a storm of protest was raised by

a section of the Hindu leadership and the Arya Samaj Press. An All-parties Hindi Raksha Sammelan was held at Amritsar, in which fiery speeches were made demanding an equal status for Hindi both in the Government office, and also as a medium of instructions in educational institutions. This militant stand was taken obviously to embarrass the Jan Sangh Party, a partner in the coalition Ministry.

The Akali leadership rejected this demand, emphasising the unilingual character of the State with Punjabi as the State Language. The Chief Minister, however, agreed to consider the issue relating to the medium of instruction in private aided schools, provided the State Jan Sangh conceded that Punjab was a unilingual State and that there was no linguistic minority in it. The State Jan Sangh after deliberations accepted this, and the Chief Minister announced on 15 July, 1969, that "keeping in view the unity, harmony and goodwill of the State, it has been decided that the status quo regarding medium of instruction in private aided schools will continue." Exception was taken to this by the extremist sections in the Sikhs. They said that a concession had been given which was not given to any other language in any other State in India. Nevertheless, the Ministry exhibited a commendable sense of realism in arriving at this solution in view of the conditions prevalent in the Punjab.

There was, however, another more serious and bigger problem that had been long affecting the Sikh masses. It related to the future of Chandigarh, the Punjabi-speaking areas given to Haryana, and the Bhakra Nangal complex. It will be recalled that Sant Fateh had gone on a fast unto death on December 17, 1966, as a preliminary to his intended self-immolation on December 27, on the issue of "return of Chandigarh and the dam projects held by the Central Government." He had been persuaded to break his fast and give up the threat of self-immolation on the solemn assurance given by the then Speaker Hukam Singh, presumably on behalf of the Central Government, that "Chandigarh would go to Punjab." The Akali leadership had waited for nearly three years expecting a favourable decision on the issues.

Chandigarh had always been taken to be a town of Punjab, built as a substitute for Lahore after partition, on the area having villages belonging to the Punjabis, Punjabi-speaking in character. It had come to be regarded as a symbol of the New Punjab. The fast of Sant Fateh Singh in 1966 had engendered in the Sikh masses an emotional attachment to the town. The long delay in making a decision by the Centre and the absence of any overt step by the Akali Dal in that connection had created an atmosphere which compelled an octogenarian, Darshan Singh Pheruman, a leader of great repute and standing, a founder-member of the Shiromani Akali Dal in the twenties of this century, and later Chief of the State Swatantra Party to announce that he would go on fast unto death from the 15th August, 1969, and would not break it until Chandigarh had been returned to Punjab. This announcement was in support of the demand of the Shiromani Akali Dal, and, for that matter, of the Punjabis, and it would have been well if the Akali leadership had supported Darshan Singh Pheruman's fast. There was however, a sharp division in the Akali leadership on this issue. One section considered the fast to have been manoeuvred and managed to damage and weaken the leadership of Sant Fateh Singh. The General Secretary of the Shiromani Akali Dal, in a statement to the press, blamed "the Congress for having arranged Pheruman's fast in a bid to revive the dying party and mislead the people," and added that "the Akali Dal was determined to get Chandigarh and other Punjabi-speaking areas for Punjab at all costs". Another section of the Akali Dal, however wanted the leadership to 'own' the fasting leader and extend support to him in his ordeal. This section held a meeting on September 16, 1969, and placed on record its opinion that the fast unto death undertaken by Darshan Singh Pheruman was in complete accord with the policy and programme of the Akali Dal and "his martyrdom in the cause of the Panth shall be in accordance with its true traditions," and expressed its determination to free the Akali Dal from what they described as the "personality cult". This dissension in the ranks of the Akali Dal on such an important issue encouraged the

Central leadership to ignore the fast despite its significance and importance. It became obvious that the fasting leader would have to die for the cause.

Darshan Singh Pheruman was arrested on 12 August, 1969, but began his fast according to schedule on 15 August while in the custody of the police. He continued it in jail, from where he was transferred to the hospital on August 26, 1969. His fast became the focal point for a Statewide agitation by all the parties except the Akali Dal in support of the struggle for the return of Chandigarh to Punjab. Appeals were made from all over the country to him to give up his fast and await the decision of the Centre. The Prime Minister wrote to him that "she was anxious to find a satisfactory solution," but "the continuance of your fast may create unavoidable complications and bitterness." He rejected all appeals, announcing his irrevocable stand to keep on his pledged word. He said in his reply to the Prime Minister that "whenever a Sikh offers an Ardas before his Guru, he must fulfill it if he is a true Sikh. Whatever may be the other factors, a Sikh is bound by whatever he says in his Ardas before the Guru."

The fast of Darshan Singh Pheruman created conditions and circumstances wherein Sant Fateh Singh had to write to the Prime Minister on August 25, 1969, demanding a decision on Chandigarh, the Bhakra Dam project and Punjabi-speaking areas in Haryana immediately as "he could not wait any longer". It became apparent that the Shiromani Akali Dal was embarking on another struggle. The Shiromani Akali Dal Working Committee unanimously adopted a resolution on September 23, 1969, giving another clarion call for a struggle to gain Chandigarh, the Dam projects and Punjabi-speaking areas kept out in the Reorganisation Act, and authorised its President to constitute an Action Committee to devise the mode of its 'Morchha' (struggle). The Working Committee declared that the Shiromani Akali Dal "is honour bound to secure Chandigarh, Bhakra Dam project and left out Punjabi-speaking areas for Punjab." Sant Fateh Singh according to the resolution, appointed a seven-men committee on September 24, 1969, under his Chairmanship, for launching the strug-

gle and in his statement to the press sought the co-operation of all other political parties.

This appeal led to the formation of an All Parties Action Committee comprising the representatives of seven political parties of the State on September 28, 1969. The State Congress representatives joined this Action Committee. The Chief Minister also called a meeting of legislators belonging to all parties in support of the cause. About 60 legislators belonging to different parties in the State except the Congress started a 24-hour 'Dharna' (continuous sitting) before the residence of the Prime Minister in New Delhi to press the demand for inclusion of Chandigarh and other Punjabi-speaking areas in Punjab. They presented a memorandum to her on the termination of their 'Dharna' wherein they dealt with the circumstances under which the Punjabi-speaking State had been formed and referred to the assurances given by Hukam Singh, which had made the Akali leader Sant Fateh Singh give up his resolve of self-immolation. The memorandum demanded the immediate transfer of Chandigarh to Punjab. The significant portion in the representation was the acceptance by all the Punjab parties of the correctness of the Akali Dal assertion that Hukam Singh had given an assurance on behalf of the Centre about Chandigarh in December, 1966.

It was on the 9th of October, 1969, that Sant Fateh Singh was reported to have offered in a meeting of the All Parties Action Committee, to commit self-immolation but the Action Committee asked him to wait as the responsibility for launching any agitation lay with them and not with the Sant. They assured him that they would give an indication for such an extreme step as and when they considered it necessary. The Action Committee decided on a mammoth rally of the Punjabis on 17 October, 1969, to demonstrate their will to secure Chandigarh. An appeal on their behalf was broadcast to the people of the State to gather at Mohali, a place in the Punjab, five miles from Chandigarh, on the main road, from where they would be asked to go in peaceful and orderly procession to the Capital.

Accordingly, there was a huge procession on October 17,

1969, and it was estimated to be of between 3 to 5 lakh persons. It seemed that all able-bodied Punjabis had come from the towns and villages, houses and hamlets. There were Akalis and Communists and Jan Sanghi as well. This thrilling sight recalled another historic procession of the Sikhs 14 years earlier, on a bright and wintry December morning, in the streets of Amritsar, that had preceded the holding of the Akali Conference symbolising the unity of the Sikhs in the struggle for Punjabi Suba. This time it was indicative of the determination of all sections in the State to secure Chandigarh. The leaders of the seven political parties in their slow moving jeeps with party flags headed the procession, and handed over their charter of demands to the Chief Commissioner of the Union Territory at Chandigarh.

Darshan Singh Pheruman died on the 27th October, 1969 on the 74th day of his fast symbolising in his supreme sacrifice a Sikh's unswerving determination to stand by his pledged word. He fervently believed that Chandigarh belonged to Punjab and in pursuance of this belief had taken a vow to fast unto death. His last testament, that "whenever a Sikh offers an Ardas before his Guru, he must fulfil it if he is a true Sikh," *will go down in history in golden letters. His Martyrdom*, however, would also exemplify discriminatory treatment to a minority, adding to the many other grievances of the Sikhs, including that Punjabi had been given recognition on the State level only after 19 years of hard struggle when other linguistic States had been created much earlier in consonance with the Congress policy. Pheruman's sacrifice would go down to posterity as a standing slur on the discriminatory and communal approach of the majority towards a minority.

The death of Darshan Singh Pheruman in fulfilment of his oath created a deep stir among the Sikhs, unprecedented in recent history, and roused public opinion throughout the country, which compelled the Union Government to announce through Home Minister Chavan that a decision on Chandigarh and connected disputes would be announced before the Budget Session of 1970. Sant Fateh Singh, too, could not delay his declaration of self-immolation and he also announced

on November 24, 1969, that he had waited sufficiently long and felt that time had come when he must announce his firm determination to go on a fast unto death on 26 January, 1970, at 10 A.M. and if he survived the ordeal till January, 31, 1970, he would commit self-immolation by burning himself on February 1, 1970, at 3.00 P.M. if Chandigarh was not merged with Punjab by then. In a written statement in Punjabi handed to the pressmen present at the time, he said that relying on the assurance on behalf of the Centre, he had postponed his decision of self-immolation in December, 1966, and had waited three years and had also been seeing the central leaders in that connection. But on one pretext or the other, sometimes mentioning that Haryana had no popular Government or that Punjab had no popular Government, that decision had been put off. He added that all the political parties of the Punjab had by then supported his demand and there was no excuse left with the Central Government to further delay the matter. He concluded that, "his cup of patience was full," and he could wait no longer.

The agitation among the Sikhs increased as the date of the intended self-immolation approached. An All-World Panthic convention of the Sikhs was called on 10 January, 1970, where Sant Fateh Singh reiterated his stand and said that "when he went on fast in December 1966, and was about to commit self-immolation, Mr. Hukam Singh, Governor of Rajasthan, arrived here and declared from the Akal Takhat that their demand had been accepted. He also announced that all common links would be abolished at once, that a Committee or Commission of linguistic experts would be appointed to determine the status of the left-out Punjabi-speaking areas, and that Chandigarh and the Bahkra Nangal complex would be given to Punjab, if they accepted the arbitration of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. He gave up his fast and the self-immolation plan when Working Committee of the Akali Dal was convinced of the assurance." He complained of the long delay of three years in non-implementation of the assurances, and referred to his two meetings with the Prime Minister, the first on July 17, 1969, and the second on September 19, 1969, along with the

Chief Minister Mr. Gurnam Singh, and felt convinced that he had given the Centre sufficient time. Having tried all courses and having failed therein, he had decided to offer a sacrifice of himself because "Mrs. Indira Gandhi (a Goddess) wanted to be appeased with his blood."⁴

The Convention adopted the resolution unanimously which had been passed by the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal a day earlier. It was a long resolution which traced the history of the struggle for Punjabi Suba extending over 20 years, stating, "It is the considered opinion of the Working Committee that after partition, the Government of India's attitude towards the Punjabis in general and the Sikhs in particular is one of great injustice, discrimination, oppression, zulam and violence. It is a part of history

The Sikhs had displayed great patriotism for the freedom of the country and they have always been in the forefront of the country's struggle. On the country's partition, the Sikhs lost their sacred and historic Gurdwaras and property worth millions, besides losing thousands of their men, women and children who became the victims of communal frenzy. This had been an unprecedented example of their patriotism." The resolution complained that the Congress Government had formed linguistic States in the rest of the country in accordance with its policy and principles, but to secure the implementation of such an accepted principle in Punjab, the Shiromani Akali Dal had to carry on a struggle for 20 years, and in this struggle they had lost many lives, and lakhs had to court imprisonment in the various 'morchas'. The resolution further conveyed its considered opinion that the central leadership had agreed to form a Punjabi Suba when it could not resist the just demand any more, and complained that even while creating Punjabi Suba, it resorted to "fraud, oppression and injustice of a low order and thus snatched from the Punjabi-speaking State, Chandigarh, Bhakra complex and some Punjabi-speaking areas." The convention further declared in the resolution their deep anguish and resentment that "the Sikh community is being compelled to reach the bitter conclusion that unheard of and unthought of discrimination is being resorted to against the Punjab and

the Punjabis because in this unfortunate land lives a self-respecting and brave minority community, the Sikhs." The resolution concluded thus: "The Working Committee considers it its duty to warn the Sikh Panth in time of the conspiracy of the Central Government (to drive Sant Fateh Singh to self-immolation) and the dangerous consequences flowing from it. It calls upon the Sikh Panth to be prepared to face this conspiracy."

Surprisingly enough, this resolution was moved by Jathedar Santokh Singh, the then Secretary of Delhi Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, who had opposed the Punjabi Suba demand.

The deliberations and the decision of the convention woke the Central leadership to the realities of the situation, and talks started to find a solution to the disputed issues. The Chief Ministers of Punjab and Haryana were summoned to New Delhi and all aspects of the disputed problems were reported to have been thrashed out. The Internal Affairs Committee had two-hour meetings on January 25, 1970, and it came out in the press that "if current thinking is an indication, Chandigarh is expected to go to Punjab but Haryana will be compensated both financially and in area in such a way that it will have no regrets for the loss of the city."³ It was also reported out in the press that "Mr. Gurnam Singh was all smiles when U.N.I. correspondent approached him for his reaction at New Delhi and expressed his satisfaction over the stand taken by the majority of the opposition leaders on the Chandigarh issue at their meeting with the Prime Minister."

No decision, however, was announced and Sant Fateh Singh went on fast on January 26, 1970, according to the schedule. It was given out then that the Central Government officials had started working at the details of a package deal to settle the Chandigarh issue. The Prime Minister received Chief Minister Gurnam Singh on the 27th January, 1970, and rumours were current at Delhi that Fazilka tehsil was being given to Haryana. This made the Punjab branch of the Communist Party of India to declare on the same day that the exclusion of the Fazilka Tehsil from Punjab, "will be another disruptive step

towards converting Punjab into a Sikh Homeland."

The expected happened on the 29th January, 1970, when the decision was announced by the Union Government through a press commanique, wherein reference was made to the claims of both the States of Punjab and Haryana for inclusion of Chandigarh in their areas and for grant of exclusive control of Bhakra and Beas projects and other areas, and stated that "the Government has come to the conclusion that it will not be in the interest of the people of Chandigarh or either of the two States to divide a city. Accordingly after very careful weighing of the claims of the two States, the Government has decided that the capital project area of Chandigarh should as a whole go to Punjab." This decision was, however, qualified laying down that, "the certain adjoining areas which were previously part of the Hindi region should be transferred to Haryana which had been joined to Chandigarh at the time of the formation of the Union Territory of Chandigarh." The press communique further stated, "the Government has also decided that a part of the Fazilka Tehsil of the Ferozepore district in Punjab comprising the old Zail of Fazilka and Fazilka town, the area within the jurisdiction of police station Khurian Sarwar and the area within the jurisdiction of old Abohar police station excluding the Zail of Chandan Khera and Kunda should be transferred to Haryana. After careful verification, list of villages and towns falling in this area will be published.

In order to provide continuity between this area and the rest of Haryana, a strip of territory of an average width of about one furlong along with the inter-State boundary between Punjab and Rajasthan in village Kandu Khera of Muktsar tehsil will also be transferred to Haryana."

The communique further announced that, "the Government proposed to appoint a Commission with suitable terms of reference which will be settled in consultation with the Government of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh," as regards other claims and counter claims of the existing inter-State boundary. Regarding the Bhakra and the Beas projects, the communique said that "such modifications

in these arrangements as are necessary will be considered later in the interest of beneficiary States."

The decision regarding the grant of part of Fazilka tehsil to Haryana had a terrific impact on the Sikh masses throughout the State, and the Sewadars of the Akal Takhat withdrawn swords had to chase away a large Sikh crowd that gathered in the precincts of Siri Darbar Sahib protesting against the proposed transfer of a part of tehsil of Fazilka, and even threw stones at the holy Akal Takhat and the adjacent building where Sant Fateh Singh was stated to be on fast awaiting the decision of the Working Committee of the Akali Dal. This sacrilege of the holy Akal Takhat by throwing of stones by the Sikhs themselves has been the first such instance in Sikh history. This showed the intensity and the depth of the resentment against the Sikh leadership at this 'barter' deal. There were violent demonstrations by the protesting Sikh crowds at Jullundur, Rupar, Fazilka, Moga, Faridkot, Malerkotla, Sirhind, Bhatinda, Kapurthala, Ludhiana, Patiala and Amritsar resulting in heavy damage to public property.

The All-Parties Action Committee held its sitting on the 30th January under the Chairmanship of Dr. Baldev Parkash, the State Jan Sangh President and resolved :

"Having considered the decision of the Government of India on the question of Chandigarh and allied matters, this meeting of the All-Parties Action Committee welcomes the acceptance of Punjab's claim to Chandigarh and its demand for the appointment of a Commission for the readjustment of the boundaries on a linguistic basis. At the same time, the Committee is of the view that grave injustice is being done to Punjab by arbitrarily transferring the Punjabi-speaking areas of Fazilka tehsil to Haryana and to do this an unprecedented step for creating a corridor is being taken. This is highly unjust, discriminatory and deserves condemnation. It is also a complete violation of the legitimate principle of secularism. It is bound to encourage communalism and can become a bad precedent. This decision is also illogical and improper in view of the fact that a Commission is proposed

to be appointed." The meeting in another resolution appealed to the Sant to give up his fast, since merger of Chandigarh with Punjab had been announced.

The Akali High Command at its meeting on the same day adopted a resolution with one dissenting vote welcoming the Centre's decision giving Chandigarh to Punjab and agreeing to appoint a Commission of linguistic experts to determine the status of Punjabi-speaking areas and also agreeing to consider afresh the modifications in the control of Bhakra and Beas projects, but condemned the giving of Punjabi-speaking areas of Fazilka tehsil to Haryana as "arbitrary, unprincipled, unjust, discriminatory and based on political expediency, and assured the people of the Fazilka area that it would not tolerate this injustice and would fight to the last to secure justice in the matter." The Akali Dal Working Committee also appealed to the Sant that in view of the fulfilment of his pledge in regard to Chandigarh, he should give up his fast and his decision of the self-immolation.

Both the resolutions of the Akali High Command and All-Parties Action Committee were conveyed to the Sant who accepted the advice and broke his fast on the 30th January, 1970, at 5.30 P. M. in his room in a building adjoining the Akal Takhat.

The Parliamentary Board of the State Jan Sangh met separately on January 1, 1970, and described the decision of the Central Government on Chandigarh and Fazilka as "most abject, humiliating, unjust and detrimental to the interests of Punjab" and urged the Punjab Government to take a bold stand and reject the decision in toto immediately. The resolution further said that "in case the Punjab Government fails to take such a decision by February 10, the Jan Sangh will be constrained to take the drastic step to lead the people in this hour of great crisis." The Parliamentary Board also in the same resolution expressed its considered view that the decision of the Centre was "mainly based on non-secular considerations and the Congress party's gain" and since it was against justice and accepted linguistic principles, "such a decision is not only a mischievous fraud

with Punjab, but is bound to injure communal harmony and encourage separate bickering in the various villages and tehsils of Punjab."

The two resolutions, one of the All-Parties Action Committee presided over by State Jan Sangh Chief, and the other by the State Jan Sangh itself, were considered by the Sikhs throughout the country to be an unequivocal acknowledgment by the Hindus themselves of the correctness of the Akali Dal stand since 1947 that the policies of the Congress leadership as regards the Sikhs had been discriminatory and communal in intent.

We are too near the events to pass judgment on the action of the principal actors in the drama to secure Chandigarh. There is, however, no doubt that Punjab has to pay very heavy price to secure Chandigarh and save the life of Sant Fateh Singh. It is likely to lose 114 villages extending over an area of 550 sq. miles, most fertile for cotton and wheat production, and in fact the granary of Punjab. The then Chief Minister Gurnam Singh designated this decision of the Central Government as "arbitrary" and communal, "to push Hindu villages into Haryana, not on the basis of language but religion." Nevertheless, many quarters in the State recall that Gurnam Singh had been the author and sponsor of the "Sikh Homeland resolution" passed at the Hari Singh Nalua Akali Conference held under the auspices of Master Tara Singh's group in May 1965 and attributed to him this subtle move to drive out the Hindu majority areas of Fazilka from Punjab in order to consolidate and strengthen the Sikh Majority position in the rest of the State. Balram Das Tandon, the then Cabinet colleague of Gurnam Singh in the coalition Ministry, at a press conference, where Krishan Lal, another Minister, was also present, said on February 1, 1970, that the 'Barter deal' was between the Chief Minister and the Union Government and "the Chief Minister never took the Cabinet into confidence in this regard. He is a willing party to the deal. He was the only person who looked happy and unperturbed until the last minute. All this shows that he was aware of the secret decision. The newspapers to-day say that the Chief Ministers had been told about it a week ago. These circumstances lead to

the obvious conclusion that Gurnam Singh's protest letter over Fazilka was only a stage-managed show. The less said about it, the better.⁶

Zail Singh, the State Congress Chief, and Iqbal Singh, the Deputy Minister in the Union Government and a member in the Lok Sabha from Fazilka area, also charged the Chief Minister in a press statement with being the author of this 'barter deal' whereby a part of Fazilka tehsil had been given to secure Chandigarh. Chief Minister Gurnam Singh stoutly denied this and said that he would resign the Chief Ministership if it was proved that he had given consent to the handing over of the Fazilka area to Haryana.

There is another version given by Gurnam Singh that the Harijan Minister in the Coalition Cabinet had given an understanding on behalf of Sant Chanan Singh to Jagjivan Ram, the Congress Chief, on the 27th January, 1970, that the Akali High Command had no objection to such a 'package deal', if Sant Fateh Singh's life could be saved thus.

The controversy is bound to go on as long as the Central Government does not make a categorical statement on the issue or the archives of the Secretariat do not disclose to research scholars the secrets, which had been responsible for the shrinking of Punjab into a Sikh Homeland. What can be said at present, however, is that the then Chief Minister Gurnam Singh proved no match for the political manoeuvres of the Central Congress leadership to exploit the anxiety of the Akali High Command to secure Chandigarh at any cost to save the life of Sant Fateh Singh. There is no doubt that he was the main negotiator during the talks. He proved a political dwarf against giants in this game of politics at the Centre. Gurnam Singh, however, had no political training or background to be aware of the moves which were detrimental to Punjab. He had been a lawyer all his life, elevated to the bench, and on his retirement was picked up by Master Tara Singh to fill the vacuum created in the Akali leadership by the absorption of many old and experienced Akali leaders in the Congress on the Congress-Akali merger in 1956. He was elected to the Assembly in 1962 on the Akali ticket and was elected a leader of the

Akali legislative assembly party, when he had to face ruthless suppression of the Sikhs by Pratap Singh Kairon. This gave him an image in the political field then, but he lacked that political training and background which is always necessary for negotiations of this nature.

The Akali leadership was confronted with another crisis which jolted Sikh solidarity and unity in the State, when the Chief Minister with some followers 'revolted' in March, 1970, against the selection of an Akali candidate for Rajya Sabha seat by the President of the Akali Dal in a manner, which the 'rebels' considered "arbitrary and dictatorial". The official candidate was defeated. The Akali High Command, however, acted promptly and came down with a strong hand on the 'rebels', expelled Gurnam Singh and his friends from the Akali Dal, and consolidated their ranks, and reconstituted another Coalition Cabinet with Jan Sangh support, thus maintaining their hold on the current events. They were able to face and overcome the crisis because of the co-operation and confidence of a section of the Hindus in the State led by the Jan Sangh.

The Akali leadership, or for that matter, the Sikh leadership in the State must always remain cognizant of the fact that the Harijan and Hindu minority in the State must be carried along and their cooperation sought in the political field. The mid-term poll in other States also has given an ample and abundant proof of the fact that minority vote always erodes the majority vote unless its support is sought. The Congress party had always succeeded in the previous General Elections because it had been able to carry the minorities with it. The Jan Sangh had captured 98 seats in Uttar Pradesh in the General Elections of 1967 with 21.6% of total votes polled in its favour but in the mid-term elections of 1969 it was only able to secure 48 seats, losing more than 50% of the seats in spite of the fact that it had polled 20.1% of the total votes. This was because it was not able to carry the effective Muslim minority in Uttar Pradesh, as by its policies in the interim period it had alienated the Muslims. The Sangh Parliamentary Board in its meeting on February 15, 1969, at New Delhi, analysed the causes of its electoral reverses and admitted that

whereas the party had won 98 seats in 1967 elections on the basis of 21.6% of the votes, a decline in its votes by 1.5% had resulted in the party losing 50% seats in the mid-term poll. Similarly in Bihar, whereas the Jan Sangh had more than doubled its votes i.e. 22% in 1967 mid-term poll as against 10.46% in the General Elections, it had added only 8 seats to the total of 26. Thakur Parshad, Vice President of the Bihar Unit, admitted, "that in U.P. the Muslim vote was an important factor in the defeat of the Sangh nominees. In Bihar, he also blamed foreign missionaries who he said had worked either for the Congress or the Jharkand Party in the Santhal Pargana, Ranchi and Singhbhum districts." These facts would show that minority votes can be great eroders if alienated, and for this reason the Akali Dal leadership did very well in carrying the Hindu votes by having an electoral alliance with the Jan Sangh. One fact stands out prominently, that if Sikh leadership plays its role in Punjab politics well, shrewdly and intelligently, and acts in a manner whereby it enjoys the confidence of the minorities, then the Akali Dal will play a dominant role hereafter. There is no doubt that Hindu leadership in the Congress and others, including the Arya Samajists and the communal sections in the Hindus have so far suspected the loyalty and patriotism of the Sikhs and discriminated against them in the policies of the country, making them suffer terribly during the last 20 years. This has naturally left a trail of bitterness and anger in the minds of the Sikhs, yet the Sikh leadership and the Sikh masses would be well advised to forgive and to forget that sad chapter in their history if they want to play an effective role in the political field of the country. And there is no reason why such should not be the policies and the programmes of the Sikh leadership. The Sikh Gurus had been the saviors and the protectors of the weak and for that reason of the Hindus, their religion and culture during a critical and crucial part of the history of India and, as such, the same should be the role of Sikh leadership in regard to the minorities in the country and the minority in the new State.

The New Punjab as the Sikh homeland, has come to stay,

with the Sikhs having the dominant voice in this area. It is for the Sikh leadership to make it a haven of happiness and greatness not only for themselves but for all those who live here. Sikh culture and Sikh religion has so far been misunderstood, deliberately or inadvertently, by those who should have tried to understand it. The Khalsa had been created to bring nearer the diverse and divergent cultures and religions of this multi-religious and multi-cultural society in the country, and that must be the role which the Sikh leadership must play hereafter. For that purpose, the Sikh traditions and culture and the Sikh way of life must be developed and strengthened in this State. This is not a theocratic and communal approach, nor should it be considered as such by the Hindus or others. The Sikhs have to strengthen themselves not for their own benefit, but for the protection and service of the country as a whole. This should be the objective in the educational and social policies of the administrators of the State. The Sikhs, old and young, should be made to feel proud of being Sikhs. There is bound to be criticism of this policy from some quarters for a short while, but this would end, creating the feeling that the approach is not communal but national. This can be done by winning the confidence of the minorities in the country and the State by Government's policies and programmes, which should be to the advantage of all.

Sources and Notes

1. 'Ajit', Punjabi Daily, 10th October 1969.
2. "The Tribune" 7th February, 1969.
3. Ibid, 22nd February, 1969.
4. Ibid, 11th January, 1970
5. Ibid, 26th January, 1970
6. Ibid, 2nd February, 1970.
7. "Hindustan Times", 16th February, 1969 (Sunday Edition).

XIV

The new Punjab is certainly not a big State. Also it is a border State with the insecurity and instability which go with that. But it is a strong and dynamic State and the granary of India. The small State of Punjab with an arable area of 195 lakh acres supplied 15 lakhs tons of wheat in Rabi 1969 to the rest of India, as against the target of procuring 20 lakhs tons of wheat fixed by the Government of India for the whole country. Punjab ranks first with regard to the output of non-food grains, and third with regard to the food-grains, in the entire country. In case of individual crops, Punjab occupies the first position with regard to the rate of growth in output, area and productivity of potatoes, with output and area of rice and cotton, and in the output of wheat.

The Bhakra Nangal project has 36 lakh acres as ultimate irrigation potential and 1204 MW of power potential. The Beas project being planned and implemented in two units will generate 264 MW of firm power and will provide irrigation water to arable commanded area of 13 lakh acres in Punjab and Haryana. There are other minor hydel projects and major and medium irrigation schemes awaiting execution. This small State has the largest concentration of small scale industries but they are decaying due to lack of facilities for ancillary growth, and this is due to the callous treatment meted out by the Union Government. The aggregate capital outlay in industrial projects sponsored by the Government of India including the 4th Five-Year-Plan outlay of 3000 crores stands

in the region of 5500 crores, but the Nangal fertilizer factory is the solitary centrally sponsored project worth 33 crores in this State. The Punjab share in the shape of investment works out to be nearly 0.8 per cent of the total outlay in the country. Yet the per capita income in Punjab is one and a half times more than in the rest of the country. The biggest blow to the economic viability of this State has been the deprivation of control of even the water and power sources under the States Reorganisation Act of 1966. In fact, the discrimination against this State by the Centre has taken mammoth proportions. The primary duty of the Administration of the new Punjab State is to take over the control of power and water resources, which are essential for the proper development and growth of the economy, both in the agricultural and in the industrial sector.

The New Punjab is, no doubt, the Homeland of the Sikhs where they are in effective majority and will have a dominant voice, whatever the party that comes in power. But it is foolish to beat a drum and keep announcing this to the rest of the country. The entire country can be claimed as a Homeland, particularly when two sacred Takhsats, Hazur Sahib and Patna Sahib, are situated in two different corners of the country, one in Bihar, the birth-place of the Tenth Guru, and the other Maharashtra at Nander. This has a religious and historical significance, that the fates ordain that the Sikhs should consider the entire country theirs, and play an effective role in its politics with Punjab as their base, projecting and spreading themselves in the rest of the country. There is no doubt, that Hindu leadership has not confided in them during the last 20 years and has treated them shabbily, but now that the Sikhs have been able to secure the safety and security of their culture, traditions and religion in a certain area, they should make strenuous efforts to win the confidence of all including the Hindus in order to play a role which destiny has allotted to them.

It is equally true that no State can develop in its own way, effectively and sufficiently, unless it is free to do so. Therefore, the Shiromani Akali Dal had rightly resolved at Batala

Central Congress leadership accepted thereafter the principle of having linguistic States admitting thereby the distinct character and culture of each unit. And having implemented this policy during the period 1950 to 1966 by the formation of the linguistic States, there is no reason why the Constitution should not be revised in the light of past experience and the States vested with powers as visualised before 1947. More so, when different States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu (Madras), West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir have made demands on these lines. The recent resolution of the present ruling party in the Punjab, the Shiromani Akali Dal at Batala, on September 30, 1968 should urge the Central Congress leadership to this path. The Sikh homeland issue or 'self determined political status of the Sikhs in the Union of India' has become a live issue for all time to come, and the only way in which this issue can be dealt with is to give increased power to the States including Punjab to avoid deterioration in the Centre-States relationship in the future.

The fact that the Congress leadership has begun to realize the importance of the position was indicated by the Union Law Minister Govinda Menon when he told the pressmen on March 2, 1969, that there should be "National Debate on the question of the powers of the Centre and States", further, "expressing his personal opinion he felt that the States should have more powers but thought that it could not be settled by an independent machinery as proposed by the Kerala Chief Minister. In his view, a few top statesmen of the country should sit together and consider whether the distribution of powers between the Centre and the States should be reviewed."

The happy feature in the present Centre-States relationship controversy is that the non-Congress Government of Punjab has so far maintained cordial relations with the Centre in spite of its grievances in matters more serious and graver in nature than those that have cropped up between the non-Congress State Governments and the Centre elsewhere. The Punjab Government can play a more effective role to persuade and press the Union Government to hasten to review redistri-

bution of the powers of the states and the Centre. But the Punjab State Government must be careful never to permit the concept of 'the Homeland' slogan to come into the picture. It must learn from past experience that attainment of Punjabi Suba was delayed, entailing more suffering and sacrifice, because of the percentage concept that was made to creep in from certain quarters.

The New Punjab is a border State with a contiguity with Jammu and Kashmir State on one side, and with West Pakistan on the other. It is also a connecting link between Jammu and Kashmir and the rest of India. The State must and will always be keen that peace and tranquility should prevail on its borders and in that matter it must co-operate and collaborate in the solution of the problem of Jammu and Kashmir, a sister State in the Union, a problem which has become perennial because of its international nature. It is not for this reason alone that the Kashmir problem needs some solution because it would bring peace and tranquility in this area to the advantage of both the States, but because the interests of the two neighbouring States, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, are identical in other matters also.

Jammu and Kashmir is a Muslim majority State as New Punjab is a Sikh majority State. What are minorities in the rest of the country have here a dominant voice. Both the States are situated at the border and would have to bear the brunt of a foreign attack. They have once borne it. It is in the interest of both that they should co-operate in regard to the security, status and position of their people, who are minorities in the rest of the country. More so, when the trend at present is to whittle down the fundamental rights of the citizens as laid down for them in the Constitution of India. This is a very unhappy trend in the country. Recently a private bill for the purpose was brought before the Lok Sabha. This was commented upon by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, while making observations at the celebrations of Human Rights Day, in November, 1968. He said, "It seems somewhat strange that while the world is celebrating the Human Rights here, and insisting upon these basic Human Rights to be enforced, and

trying to find the means for the enforcement of them at international levels, efforts should be going on here to take power to whittle down the Fundamental Rights if possible. I cannot understand why there should be cleavage of opinion on the parts of the Indians and that there should be an attempt to reverse the gear so to speak, on this point." He observed further, "With this background one is, as I said, led to think why they should have a human cry, that the Human Rights or the Fundamental Rights at any rate, the most important part of them should be capable of being reduced by Parliament. However, that is for the Parliament to decide. It is none of my concern because I am not a member. But it seems rather odd that this should happen in the year of Human Rights." He added: "By all means one can go for that and go for it in a constitutional way but to jeopardise, and I use the word jeopardise deliberately, the other Fundamental Rights by taking power to have them reduced from what they are in the Constitution might well mean a reversal of the policies of the Nation also."

Both the States, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, as units of the country can take effective steps to stop this trend in the country's thinking. It had been hoped that with the modernisation of the Indian Medieval society and with the 'secular' stand of the Union and State Governments, the minority and majority problems would slowly liquidate. The picture, however, has been entirely different. The Sikhs, though a small and sturdy minority, quite capable of looking after themselves, have yet substantial reasons to feel aggrieved at the very apparent implications of the delay in the formation of the Punjabi Suba, and at the treatment accorded in taking away the control of the water and power Resources of the state; and by depriving it of its Capital, Chandigarh, a Punjabi-speaking area from all aspects and other Punjabi speaking areas. This is, however, not the end of the matter. The way in which the Sikh minority is being treated in Haryana is an illustration and an example of the dangers to the minorities in the country in different zones.

Several factors have contributed to making the disabilities and difficulties of the Muslim minority more painful. The

dead weight of the History is against them. The deep rooted differences extending over centuries past in the country's history cannot be eliminated overnight, but no effort has been made to remove them either. The complexes created between the majority and the minority, the Rulers and the ruled, have left their trail and persist with greater emphasis after the partition of the country. The vast Muslim masses feel themselves bewildered and forsaken, when Muslim elite and leadership migrated to Pakistan on its formation, leaving their co-religionists leaderless and helpless at the mercy of the majority, that felt elated at the newly won freedom, political and religious. The time to avenge themselves had come. With it spread the wave of communalism in the majority, which is far more dangerous than that of the minority, and it cannot be controverted that it has been very much on the increase. The strength and sweep of the avowedly communal and militant Hinduism has grown alarmingly. The Muslim minority finds itself unsafe and insecure throughout the country. It has suffered at the hands of the majority at several places after the partition.

"What happened in Ahmadabad in September 1969 was not a communal riot in the ordinary sense. Ranchi, Rourkela, Calcutta, Jamshedpur were put to shame," wrote one Hindu correspondent of a leading English daily. An Agency Report published in the newspapers on September 23, 1969 said, "Sabarmati Harijan Ashram, a place hallowed by the memory of Mahatma Gandhi, was not spared by the hooligans during the four-day orgy of violence in the city.

With hardly ten days left for Gandhi birth centenary, the house of an Ashramite who had lived with the Mahatma for almost all his life of 65 years, was attacked twice.

Posing a great threat to the lives of his family, the hooligans tried to axe open the door. Fortunately the Ashramites were able to pacify the mob by pleading with them not to indulge in more violence on the ground from where Gandhiji gave his message of peace to mankind.

The police, who arrived late on the scene, are now guarding the Ashram."¹

Another Hindu correspondent writing in "The Patriot" des-

cribed aptly the role of the Administration, "And a cabinet composed of complacent and self-righteous men who shamefacedly narrated what they had done to bring the situation under control—a set of people without any sense of guilt and anxious to offer defence against the charge of dereliction of duty. They were all dumb founded when, in the presence of the Chief Minister, the leader of the delegation of the minorities, bitterly said to the Prime Minister "Inderaben, ask Hitubhai (Chief Minister) why curfew was not imposed when we approached him with the request to do so ask Hitubhai why public meeting was allowed to be held after the curfew was announced—ask Hitubhai this and ask Hitubhai that." The only conclusion which the Prime Minister could have drawn from all that she saw and heard was that the political leadership of Gujarat and the State administration had failed in their duty to protect the lives and properties of the citizens." Prime Minister Indira Gandhi admitted in her speech at Imphaul, where she was at the time, that the 'disturbances' were "Obviously pre-planned," and she added, "we had some information about it earlier."

Yet another correspondent writing in "The Statesman" (October 6, 1969) wrote frankly, "The Muslim minority has many grievances, most of them real and some perhaps imaginary. Even legitimate grievances such as insecurity or denial of due share of jobs are highly complex and deserve to be discussed at length separately. But the point is that redress of these grievances would be easier, when they become a national rather than sectional concern. Before that can happen, however, the majority must begin to make some effort to understand what really ails the minority. The brave talk of emotional integration will have meaning only if there is first an attempt to comprehend the emotions of the minority."

How are the emotions of the minorities to be comprehended unless the two States, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, in a position to project the minorities' voice and grievances, cooperate and collaborate and thus help in the security and protection of the minorities in the country. No doubt there are provisions in the Constitution of India relating to Funda-

mental Rights, which guarantee equality of opportunity, but it is about the implementation of which the minorities, particularly the Muslims, have a grievance. Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan, more known as Badshah Khan, had been the front-rank freedom fighter during the independence struggle. He is looked upon as a great friend of India. He was in this country, on the invitation of the Government of India, to attend the Gandhi Centenary Celebrations and to receive the Nehru Award. "Addressing pressmen at Raj Bhawan at Ahmedabad on October 21, 1969, when a correspondent pointed out that unlike Pakistan, India was wedded to secularism, he replied, 'what is the use of its being just on paper? Is it being implemented?' How could communal clashes take place if there was true secularism, he wondered."³ That there is a under current of dissatisfaction in the minorities in that regard, there can be no doubt. Sheikh Abdullah addressing a protest meeting in March 1969 at Mujahid Manzil in Srinagar said, "He was not keen to enter into an argument with the Jan Sangh. He would ask those in India claiming to be secular as to how many Muslims had got jobs during the past twenty years in India, and how many were encouraged in trade. The banks in the Kashmir valley, he said, refuse to advance loans to local people, even if they pledged their property against it. But no such restriction was imposed in Jammu, where loans were freely available. Is it because Kashmir is predominantly Muslim, while Jammu is Hindu, he asked."⁴ He complained bitterly, "When we linked ourselves with India, we had thought, we were associating ourselves with a nation which would treat all equally, but our assessment proved wrong." Addressing Hindu leadership in India, he said, "It is better for you to announce that yours is a Hindu State, but even then you will have to protect the rights of Muslims. Pakistan says that theirs is a Muslim State, but it does not mean that they would trample on the rights of non-Muslims there."

Another eminent individual, Badr-ud-din Tayabji, once Indian Ambassador and very much known for his 'secular' outlook, wrote in an article in the "Statesman" "So far as the past is concerned the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

And that the pudding has been well eaten can best be seen from the emergence of the crop of stout trenchant men among the majority, whose appetites have been so whetted that they have shed all their dietary inhibitions. They are willing to swallow up the Taj Mahal, Eta-mad-ud-dowlah's tomb, Sikandra and other such architectural achievements of the Moghal period, provided they are assured that they are no better—this is a matter for taste than all that has preceded them. This is national integration with a vengeance and the minorities may be excused for being a little alarmed at the suddenness and violence of the embrace.”⁵

This unfortunate trend in the thinking of the majority is exactly the reason, why the two States, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, must exert their influence in favour of the minorities in the country. Sheikh Abdullah should be well aware, that whatever one may think of the mentality of the Hindu majority, one has to recognise the fact that it exists and that it cannot be otherwise, unless, as Badur-ud-din Tayabji very aptly wrote in the same article, “The principal minority is put to work in a constructive cause for the national good. That alone could give it the basic assurance of “participation and contribution,” that is so necessary and bring home to the majority the realisation that it (principal minority) was an element in the nation that was earning its own keep.” And that role can very well be played by the State of Jammu and Kashmir as leader of the Muslim minority and new Punjab as leader of the Sikh minority, and both States can effectively act in that regard by supporting each other, as autonomous members of the Union of India. It was for this reason and with such feelings, that Maulana Isranul Haque, President All India Muslim Mutahada Muhaz, suggested on January 10, 1968 that Sheikh Abdullah should be given a seat in the Central Cabinet so that, “He may lead 6.5 crores Muslims in the entire country.”

There is no doubt that the Muslim leadership in Kashmir is insistent on its demand for a solution of a Kashmir problem. Sheikh Abdullah has been in jail for most of the period after 1953 for this cause. Yet, the problem is nowhere near solution. It has become a permanent problem in the country's policy not

only affecting the border States of Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, but also the international situation. This has to be solved sooner or later and with its solution the country's foreign policy will be very much affected to the benefit of India. However, a most unfortunate and tragic aspect of the problem which has been hanging so long is that any sound suggestion in this regard is looked askance at and considered a betrayal of the country. Jai Parkash Narain is one public man of pre-eminence and status who has been and is bold enough to advise and insist on the solution of the problem to the satisfaction of both India and Kashmir, but his suggestions have been ridiculed. He made such suggestion in 1964, when Sheikh Abdullah was released, in an article in the 'Hindustan Times'; but even a public man like Ajit Parshad Jain, the then President of the U.P. Congress, a very prominent public man also and a Union Minister at one time, was reported to have said that there were men who held opinions different from those of Jai Parkash Narain on Kashmir, but they had imposed upon themselves 'extreme restraint' but that, "If provocation of the type that Mr. Narain is making continues, their patience might be exhausted." Such threats do not augur well for the benefit of the country in regard to proper thinking about the solution of the problems. There is no gain saying the fact, that there are certain fundamentals involved in the Kashmir problem. There are certainly two opinions whether Jammu and Kashmir State has become an integral part of the country without consent of its people. Kashmir has certainly become an international problem. This was conceded by Prime Minister Nehru in his speech in Parliament on August 7, 1952, when he said, *inter alia* . "It is an international problem. It would be an international problem any how if it concerns any other nation besides India, and it does. It became further an international problem, because a large number of the countrymen also took interest and gave adviceso while the accession was complete in law and in fact, the other fact which has nothing to do with the law also remains, namely, our pledge to the people of Kashmir--if you like to the people of the world--that this matter can be reaffirmed or cancelled or cut-out by the people

of Kashmir if they so wish. We do not want to win people against their will and with the help of Armed force, and if the people of Jammu and Kashmir State so wish it, to part company from us, they can go their way and we shall go our way. We want no forced marriages, no forced unions like this.

"It is inevitable that we should do so if you bear in mind this past history of 4 or 5 years, the assurances we had given and the fact that Kashmir has become an international issue, apart from being a national one. So we have to treat it on a somewhat separate footing... So, we accept this basic proposition that this question is going to be decided finally by the goodwill and pleasure of the people of Kashmir, no, I say, by the goodwill and pleasure of even this Parliament if it so chooses, but because this Parliament may not have the strength to decide it—I do not deny that—but because this Parliament has not only laid down in this particular matter that a certain policy will be pursued in regard to Jammu and Kashmir State but it has been our policy.....

"Therefore, we must be clear in our minds that this question in regard to the future of Jammu and Kashmir State can ultimately only be decided by the people of Jammu and Kashmir State. Having come to that conclusion then let us fashion our other policies accordingly. Then let us not find fault with something here and there because it does not fit in with our wishes... ."

Such was the stand of Prime Minister Nehru and the Government of India till July 7, 1955, when Home Minister Pant in a speech at Srinagar said: "Kashmir accession was a reality which could not be changed because the people, through their representatives in the constituent assembly, had decided to remain with India." He justified this stand on the plea that the circumstances had changed and the time factor was the most important, "While I am not oblivious of the initial declaration of India, I cannot ignore the important series of facts to which I have referred," but despite this the Prime Minister Nehru in his press conference on July 16, 1955, said that he had written to the Prime Minister of Pakistan in reply to his protest letter about the stand of Home Minister Pant that,

"We stand prepared to explore all possible avenues for a possible settlement of this and other issues with Pakistan." Of course, later addressing a press conference in New Delhi on April 2, 1956, he made a declaration ruling out plebiscite in Kashmir under the existing conditions. The change in the stand was possibly due to the support of Russia when Krushchev and Bulganin visited India in the end of 1955, and Krushchev, speaking at a reception given by the State Chief Minister at Srinagar on December 10, 1955, said, "The question of Kashmir as one of the States of the republic of India has already been decided by the people of Kashmir." But this did not close the controversy in the international field, when a year later A. I. Mikoyan, first Deputy Premier of Russia, said at Karachi on March 25, 1956, that "the future of Kashmir in the ultimate analysis would be determined by the people of Kashmir."

There is no gain—saying the fact, that plebiscite in Kashmir must be excluded from all solutions that have to be found. Plebiscite would affect the fate of the minorities both in India and in Pakistan with dangerous repercussions and this fact has come to be appreciated by the rulers of Pakistan also. Therefore President Ayub, (as he then was) in his speech at Lahore on March 23, 1962, said that if the plebiscite was not the best solution for Kashmir, "then let us have another solution satisfactory to all." This is a clear indication of the fact that alternate solution can be found if efforts are made.

A very unfortunate feature in our political and public life in this country is that we are not tolerant of the views of those from whom we differ. No attempt is made to analyse and appreciate the view point of others. We are led by emotions and sentiments, and do not have a practical approach to the issues involved. No attempt has been made to judge and appreciate the stand of Sheikh Abdullah. It has been conveniently forgotten that he stood by India in the crucial chapter of the country's history but now he has been looked upon with suspicion by that very section which admired him at one time. It has been a matter of regret and misfortune in his case as it was in regard to Sikh leadership particularly

Master Tara Singh. Master Tara Singh in all his political career sought a decent and respectful life for the Sikhs within the Union of India, but his moves and agitations were considered betrayal. Similarly, when Sheikh Abdullah seeks security and an honourable place for the Muslims of Kashmir, linked to India, and fervently feels that the political stability in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, and the economic prosperity of the State lies in amity and concord between the two countries, India and Pakistan, his motives are suspected. It should be recalled that as far back as October 15, 1932, when he was the President of the Muslim Conference—a communal organisation—he had said, "The Kashmir movement is not communal, but has come into existence to get the grievances of all classes of people redressed—our country cannot progress until we learn to live amicably with one another." He headed the organisation, Muslim conference then, but when he found that others, Hindus and Sikhs, were ready to support him in the movement to rid the State of the autocratic ruler, he declared in his Presidential address to the 6th Annual Session of the Muslim Conference on March 26, 1938, "We must end communalism by ceasing to think in terms of Muslims and non-Muslims when discussing political problems,—and we must open our doors to all such Hindus and Sikhs as believe in the freedom of the country from the shackles of irresponsible rule and change the Muslim Conference into a national conference."

It should not be forgotten also that he was the one leader in a State having an overwhelming Muslim majority to have faced and flouted Jinnah's wishes by warning him, saying, "If Jinnah does not give up the habit of interfering in our politics, it will be difficult for him to go in an honourable manner." Jinnah was then in Srinagar and was supporting the Muslim Conference. Even when in jail for three years in 1946, when the Muslim League was at the height of power, he was reported to have written in a letter to a friend in Jammu from prison that the Maharaja should declare the State's accession to India, and not be misled by the declarations of the Muslim Conference leaders who were advising him to become independent. Explaining his stand many years later at a meeting at

Azad Park in New Delhi he said, "In 1944, Mr. Jinnah tried to persuade us to join hands with him and support his two-nation theory; he failed. However, he succeeded in other parts of India, and Pakistan was established while Kashmir remained out of Pakistan with its overwhelming Muslim majority. It continued to expose the fallacy of the theory and challenged the soundness of its very basis. He (Jinnah) tried to get at the point of sword what he had failed to obtain by persuasion." This speech was made in February, 1948. It is unfortunate that the Sheikh should be looked upon with suspicion despite these antecedents.

He was the architect of the Delhi agreement of July 24, 1952, wherein the constitutional tangle of the relationship between India and Kashmir was settled, and a special status was given to the State with complete internal autonomy and with the subjects of foreign affairs, defence and communications vesting in the Union Government. No doubt, this did not give complete power to the Central Government but Sheikh Abdullah was quite justified, as he explained it in his speech at Ranbir Singhpura on April 10, 1952, when he said;

"We want to join India without any kind of mental reservations. But how can we do so as long as we are not convinced about the complete elimination of communalism in India? We are prepared to welcome application of India's Constitution to Kashmir in its entirety once we are satisfied that the grave of communalism has been finally dug in India; of that we are not clear..... It is all very well for people in India to think that communalism in the country has been finally eliminated. But no one can deny that the communal spirit still exists in India. Many Kashmiris are apprehensive as to what will happen to them and their position if, for instance, something happens to Pandit Nehru. We do not know. As realists, we Kashmiris have to provide for all eventualities. That is why I say, those who want Kashmir to lose its separate identity are talking without any conception of the practical realities that face us to-day.... If there is no special status for Kashmir in the Indian Constitution, how can we go to the Muslims in Kashmir and convince them that India does not

intend to interfere in the internal affairs of Kashmir? We have acceded to India in regard to defence, foreign affairs and communications and not in respect of other subjects because we wanted some kind of autonomy for ourselves in internal matters."

Conditions, however, changed when Parja Parishad was formed at Jammu and agitation started on a large scale demanding the complete merger of the State of Kashmir and Jammu in India on the slogan, "Ek Desh Men do Vidhan, Ek Desh Men do Nisban, Ek Desh Men do Pradhan, Nahin challenge, Nahin Challenge". This agitation had the support of the large section of Hindus in India. It was then that Sheikh Abdullah started having doubts about the accession of Kashmir to India. He was not satisfied with the withdrawal of the Agitation and said, "Though the Parishad agitation had ceased, the conflict of ideals and interests created by it remains. The demand for the merger of the State with India is still there and so long as these aims exist, the sword will hang over the basic relations between India and Kashmir. This is a serious matter."

Therefore, it was the communalism of a section of the Hindus of India that goaded him to deviate from the original stand. He is still not in favour of accession to Pakistan and wants to maintain links with India. Speaking at Anantnag on March 17, 1968, he said, 'Indo-Pakistan friendship is an issue of life and death with me. There is no reason why Indian leadership in power now does not rise to the occasion and find out a solution to the Kashmir problem which would also lead to amity and friendship between India and Pakistan.'" Kashmir is a majority Muslim State and there is every justification in its leadership to find a solution which gives them security and honourable living in the future Union or confederacy with India.

Whereas Muslim leadership in Kashmir is keen to bring about reconciliation between India and Pakistan for the reason that it will be economically advantageous to the State of Jammu and Kashmir by bringing in free flow of trade and commerce there, Punjab should be equally interested for the

same reason that there should be friendship between India and Pakistan. Besides, Punjab is bound to be a victim and prone to be a battle-field, as it had been previously, whenever there is a conflict between India and Pakistan. It cannot have a stable and sound future, economically and politically, unless this danger of a cold war is eliminated for all times to come.

It must also be appreciated that the move in the Parliament and the country to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution of India, and to eliminate the distinct entity of the State of Jammu and Kashmir in the Union, has been another cause which has strengthened the suspicion of the Kashmir Muslims in regard to the motives of the majority in India. This distinct position of the State in the Federal Union of India must be maintained, and it must be recognised that any abrogation unilaterally of Article 370 would be unjustified when it has been so definitely provided, and Article 370 had been devised to give a special position and character to the State in and to regulate its relations with the Union of India. This provision was a temporary provision, no doubt, but that does not convey that it can be abrogated or amended unilaterally when the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly had been vested with the power to finalise the constitutional relations between that State and the Union of India. This is indicative of the legal position that all modifications or amendments to Article 370 or any other article in the Constitution in their application to Jammu and Kashmir must be dependent on the decision of the Constituent Assembly of that State. There is no doubt that the Constituent Assembly of that State did adopt a Constitution on 17th November, 1956, providing its application from January 26, 1957, wherein in Article 3, it has been laid down that "The State of Jammu and Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India." This is important, but there is a section in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, mainly the Muslims, who plead that the Constituent Assembly had no right to make a provision of the kind without reference to the vote of the people. This section of the people has further alleged that the elections held subsequently to the

State Assembly were a farce. During the elections of 1962, for 32 seats out of 43 in the Kashmir valley, the National conference nominees were returned un-opposed, and there were definite charges about the use of force and illegal rejections of nomination papers of the opposition. 'The Hindustan Times' even in its editorial of February 12, 1962, referred to "ugly rumours" about the use of force and wrote, "Public confidence in the fair and free elections will remain badly shaken unless there is thorough going investigation into the charges of malpractices which have been levelled by the opposition against Bakshi Sahib's Government." Therefore, in the circumstances it would be in the interest of the country if the distinct position of this State is allowed to be maintained, and even if it is necessary the relationship should be changed in a manner which should satisfy the ambitions of the people of that State.

Sheikh Abdullah is a recognised leader of the Muslims of Kashmir. To deny this is to deny the truth. He does not stand for plebiscite either. He made it clear on his release on April 4, 1964, when he repeated his demand that the people of Kashmir should be granted the right of self determination by fulfilment of the pledges; but at the same time he emphasised that an earnest attempt be made to arrive at settlement with Pakistan on the future of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. He also laid emphasis on the fact that the settlement must be such as would not endanger the future of the minorities of India and Pakistan, or leave either State with a sense of defeatism, "Kashmir should not lose its individuality. It will live if India lives and Pakistan lives. The State is an integral part of the sub-continent." He also emphasised that Kashmir, where it has been a cause of discord between India and Pakistan could also be a source of reconciliation. He has stood by this declaration till now. His visit to Pakistan at the instance of Nehru before his unfortunate death was to bring about settlement of the Kashmir issue between the two countries. It was a very bold and statesman like step on the part of Nehru to have agreed to his going to Pakistan. The All Parties convention held in Srinagar on October 16, 1968, and discus-

sions there in, are indicative of the fact that Kashmir wants only a distinct position and also is desirous of reconciliation between India and Pakistan. In this regard Kashmir should be allowed to play that role. It would be to India's advantage.

It should not be forgotten also that Pakistan is suspicious of Indian motive in its regard. Ex-President Ayub in his book "Friends, Not Masters" writes, when discussing the differences between the two countries; "At the back of it was India's ambition to absorb Pakistan or turn her into a satellite. The Indian leaders made no secret of the design. Mr. Acharya Kripalani, who was President of the Indian National Congress in 1947, declared, 'Neither the Congress nor the nation has given up its claim of United India. Sardar Patel, the first Indian Home Minister and the strong man of the Congress party, announced at the same time, "Sooner or later we shall again be united in common allegiance to our country." From the day of independence Pakistan was involved in a bitter and prolonged struggle for her very existence and survival." These suspicions are ill founded. This might have been said by the Indian leaders in 1947 in order to soothen the wounds-of the Hindus due to the partition of the country, but the Indian leadership has very often declared thereafter that it has no ambitions or objectives to attack the integrity and sovereignty of Pakistan. This should be known to Pakistan leaders. There is no gain-saying another fact, however, that Pakistan considers the control and possession of Kashmir vital to its interests. Ex-President Ayub in the same book writes about his meeting with Nehru: "we took up the threads during the second meeting in Murree on September 21, 1960. I again broached the subject of Kashmir. I told him that this was the most propitious moment for settling this dispute, to bring peace to India and Pakistan. He was an accepted leader in India and perhaps people in Pakistan would be prepared to listen to me too. Such a coincidence might not occur again for a long time, so it would be a great pity, if we were to lose this opportunity. Any thought, that time would make Pakistan forget the need for an honourable and fair solution to the problem of Jammu and Kashmir

was highly unrealistic. The whole country was united on this issue; and no Government in Pakistan could possibly forget the problem. I showed him a map of Kashmir and West Pakistan and how all our major rail and road communications and canal headworks were completely out flanked. The security of Pakistan required a fair solution of the problem. There was also the economic reason now, that West Pakistan was dependent on the use of waters of only three rivers. Pakistan had to conserve every single ounce of water in these rivers and that could be done only in the hilly areas of Kashmir. Similarly the further power requirements of Pakistan could only be met by hydro-electric generation in those areas. For India and Pakistan to live as good neighbours this problem would have to be solved one of these days. If it could be solved peacefully and honourably and in accordance with the commitments of the two Governments, both sides would derive enormous advantages. India should then be able to reduce its army by half and we too should be able to cut down our military expenditure proportionately."⁸

The following facts become clear from the above discussion:

(i) Pakistan was originally keen to control Kashmir and get its possession, and for the purpose had been emphasising the solution of the problem by a fair and impartial plebiscite expecting thereby that the State of Jammu and Kashmir would accede to Pakistan. Later, it gave up that demand, seeking an alternative solution satisfactory to the parties. Despite this it tried to force a solution in 1965 by infiltration into the State resulting in the conflict of September 1965. The result of that conflict would have made it evident to Pakistan that use of force cannot be the solution of the Kashmir problem.

(ii) The Muslim leadership in Kashmir has been consistently pleading for a solution satisfactory to India and Pakistan and the Kashmir Muslims with the reservation that the individuality of Kashmir should not be eliminated. This cannot be construed as seeking sovereignty for Kashmir. It may mean a solution of this problem by giving Kashmir a more autonomous status in confederacy with India.

(iii) It must, however, be admitted, that the Kashmir problem has come to be, and will remain, an international problem, providing an opportunity to the interested countries of the world to interfere in the affairs of this sub-continent. The conflict on this issue between India and Pakistan is a standing drain on the finances of both the countries diverting the much needed money for development to defence measures. In this, Punjab has a vital interest.

(iv) Punjab is vitally interested in Indo-Pakistan relations inasmuch as, being a border State, it has already suffered in its economy because of Indo-Pakistan conflict of 1965. It is prone to suffer more, if another conflict is not averted and a solution is not found in this regard. The solution of the problem is as vital to India as to the State of Jammu and Kashmir and also to Punjab.

General K.M. Cariappa, formerly Commander-in-Chief of the Indian forces, in an interesting article in *The Tribune* in March 1969 under the caption "Need for fresh thinking of Indo-Pakistan issue" very aptly remarked, "We cannot say that there is no such problem, otherwise why is the matter still allowed to be hanging fire in the U.N.?" He disclosed that he and C.C. Desai had an interview with the then President of Pakistan, Mohd. Ayub Khan in October, 1967, wherein, "The Pakistan President had suggested that our two countries should each set up a Committee of hand-picked civil servants and soldiers and politicians to study the Kashmir issue in detail and put up 'talking points' to our Prime Minister and to himself, which they could use as the basis for discussion together to try and find the answer acceptable to both. This is not an impracticable nor improper formula to consider. Once this is accepted I feel sure that in its wake the reopening of trade, easy communication, visa etc. will follow without first having to wait for the 'answer'." This also indicates that a solution of the problem is possible.

Solution of the Kashmir problem is vital to India not only because of its commitment to the United Nations Organisation, the drain on its finances, the maintenance of its secular character before the world, but also for the purpose of maintaining

peace in this sub-continent. The Indo-Pakistan conflict and the cold war thereafter has been the biggest headache of the country, both politically and economically. India cannot get back the vast territory occupied by China unless it solves its problems with Pakistan. It cannot fight on two fronts at one and the same time. This Kashmir problem with Pakistan can be solved now, when Pakistan leadership does not insist on a plebiscite and has said and laid stress on alternative proposals agreeable to all parties. Pakistan may not directly be a party to the problem of Kashmir, but it was Pakistan against which a complaint was made in the U.N. and Pakistan is in occupation of a little less than half of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The Kashmir people are keen to have the two halves united in order to have a viable area economically strong and politically united. This right of theirs cannot be denied. The solution lies mainly with the leadership of the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah can play a key role in that regard. He can bring in amity and conciliation between India and Pakistan if his services are availed of. Nehru had begun to appreciate this when, intervening in the debate in a Session of the All-India Congress Committee during discussion on the communal situation in Bombay on May 16, 1964, he expressed the hope that India and Pakistan would develop close relations to the interest of both, adding that if Sheikh Abdullah could help the two countries to improve the relations. "He will have done a great service to both countries. We will have to help him in this attempt." Nehru admitted then that "Sheikh Abdullah is wedded to the principles of secularism and does not wish anything to be done to vitiate these in any way. He does not believe in the two-nation theory which was the basis of the formation of Pakistan. Nevertheless, he hopes that it should be possible for India, holding on to her principle, to live in peace and friendship with Pakistan and thus incidentally to put an end to the question of Kashmir.....If Sheikh Abdullah can help in doing this, he will have done a great service to both countries. We are prepared to help him in this attempt but in doing this he must adhere to our principles as well as to our basic attitude in regard to Kashmir."

It was in consequence of this switch in the foreign policy that Sheikh Abdullah was given a passport to visit Pakistan. He met President Ayub (as he then was) and other leaders during his sixteen-day stay there. His role and speeches during this visit were not detrimental to the interest of this country. He impressed on the people of Pakistan that the solution of the Kashmir problem should be such as would not weaken the secular character of India or jeopardise the security of the minorities there. He was criticised by most of the Pakistani press, but he stuck to his stand. "The Dawn", the Muslim League paper, wrote that Sheikh Abdullah's statements, "have caused a certain amount of disappointment among the public in general and the intelligentsia in particular." The paper attributed this to the fact, that Sheikh Abdullah had been "lured by the outward show of India's secularism obviously forgetting the inhuman treatment meted out to 60 million Muslims there." Similarly 'The Jang' an Urdu daily, controverted Sheikh Abdullah's statement that there was any change of heart on the part of India. 'The Pakistan Times' in a leaderette wrote, "The fight for a plebiscite has now entered the final phase and we earnestly hope that this last chance of a peaceful settlement be not lost away." Other papers also accused him of having changed his position from demanding a plebiscite to bringing about Indo-Pakistan amity. There is no doubt that Sheikh Abdullah in his letter to President Ayub after publication of the book 'Friends, Not Masters' contradicted him in regard to his disclosure, that Sheikh Abdullah and Mirza Afzal Beg, when they met him put forward an 'absurd' proposal for a confederation of India, Pakistan and Kashmir, which he rejected; but the wordings of the letter of Sheikh Abdullah when he wrote, "To be fair to Mr. Nehru, he never forced us to put before you any particular proposal" indicate that during the talks which these two Kashmiri leaders had with Nehru before their visit to Pakistan included some suggestion about having a confederation in the sub-continent. The unfortunate death of Nehru at the end of June, 1964 left the problem unsolved. Sheikh Abdullah, even after his detention on return from his foreign tour, met Mrs. Gandhi on

January 4, 1968, in the hope that he might contribute to the solution not only of the Kashmir problem, but to bringing about a reconciliation between Pakistan and India. He, on the same day, called for nationwide effort to infuse life and reality in the Tashkent Declaration and at a press conference stated that he would put in his best efforts for the solution of the Kashmir problem which would be acceptable to India, Pakistan and the people of Kashmir and asserted that he would not be a party to any solution which would compromise India's honour as well Pakistan's honour because such a solution would not bring about a lasting peace between the two countries. When questioned further he said that he was convinced, "that President Ayub sincerely wants to establish peaceful relations with India," and said even earlier, "I am anxious to spend the years that lie ahead of me to foster peace and friendship between India and Pakistan. I am certain that the people of India and Pakistan would welcome nothing more eagerly than an era of peace and mutual understandingas long as I live, my life is dedicated to the cause of Indo-Pakistan friendship and of inter-racial and inter-religious unity. Regarding Kashmir I would say that in such friendship between India and Pakistan lies the hope of my State's peace and prosperity." He wanted something positive, "to proceed further," but there was no response. He returned to Delhi again on April 28, 1968, to have a second round of talks but he was avoided and had to go back to Kashmir without any hope of settlement.

Again, addressing a luncheon gathering at the Press Club of India at New Delhi on October 15, 1969, he declared that 'Independent Kashmir' was a 'charming idea' to the old problem, but was full of difficulties, and reiterated that any solution to the Kashmir problem must be judged from the angle whether it brought peace to Kashmir, India and Pakistan. "Kashmir cannot be taken in isolation" he added. When asked, if he would accept a status for Kashmir within the Indian Union on the lines of Badshah Khan's (Khan Abdul Gafar Khan) demand for Pakhtoonistan in Pakistan, he said, "If that is the solution you have in mind, let us examine it and see if it will bring peace to Kashmir, India and Pakistan".

He clarified, that things could be ironed out by sitting across the table, and complained, "But those who can deliver the good (the Government of India) sit mum, what can be done"?

I have considered it relevant to discuss in such detail developments in the problem of the State of Jammu and Kashmir during the last two decades, and the guidelines in the policies of the Government of India in that regard, for the reason that the problem has a bearing on Punjab, a contiguous State. The conditions and situations there and the future of the people has a vital effect on the peace and prosperity of this border State, and New Punjab would always fervently wish that the State of Jammu and Kashmir remains in the Union of India playing an effective role to bring concord between India and Pakistan and to act as a bridge between the two. This would result in the maintenance of peace on the border and enable free trade and easy communication between the two countries which would benefit this border State also.

The New Punjab should also be very much concerned in amity and friendship between two countries, India and Pakistan, because most of the important religious places of the Sikhs are situated in West Pakistan. In a Sikh, it is ever an ardent wish that he should have easy and free access to these Gurdwaras. He prays every morning in his daily prayer that he may be granted the boon of the freedom of access to and service of, these Gurdwaras. The feeling is so deep in this regard that the Sikhs feel very helpless and frustrated at the callous attitude of the power that be. After a long persuasion and pressure on the Government of India, an agreement had been arrived at in May, 1955 between the two countries, India and Pakistan, drawing up list of 260 Gurdwaras, where proper management and the easy access of the Sikhs of India to them had to be arranged for. Fifteen years have passed by now and the Government of India has been able to secure neither their proper management, nor easy access of the Sikhs to them. Recent reports mention that Pakistan authorities have acquired the Gurdwara properties. Out of these 260 Gurdwaras of

historical importance with which the sentiments of the Sikhs are so intimately attached, the Department of Archaeology, Ministry of Education and Information of the Government of Pakistan in their publication in 1962, "Sikh Shrines in Pakistan" admit 130 Gurdwaras to be of such importance and historical significance attached to the life of the First Guru, the Fifth Guru and the Sixth Guru. It is the duty of the Rulers of the New Punjab to have a regard for the sentiments of the Sikh and see that they contribute to the solution of the standing problem between the two countries by arranging for the proper management of these sacred Gurdwaras, and the service of the holy Granth Sahib there; and this can only be done if the administration of the Punjab puts pressure on the Government of India to bring about peace and good relations between the two States. Once peace is brought about and trade and easy communications flow, and good relations develop, the declaration of Nankana Sahib a free town on the lines of 'Vatican' would not be an impossibility.

There is another reason also, why the New Punjab (India) should be interested in bringing about the friendship and amity between the two countries, India and Pakistan. 'West Punjab' (Pakistan) is the heart land of Pakistan and dominates the economic and political life of that country. Its language is Punjabi. For the First time, a demand has been made in Pakistan that the language of 27 per cent of Pakistanis (West Punjabis) be given its due place in that country. Berindranath, a correspondent writing in the "Tribune" in September 1969, under "Window on Pakistan", reports from there

"Recently a petition was signed by over 500 Punjabi writers, intellectuals and lovers of the language. They have demanded that Punjabi should be made the medium of instruction at the primary school level in the Punjabi-speaking areas. It was pointed out that in the case of Pushtu and Sindhi the principle of mother-tongue being the medium of primary education, has already been accepted.

The new education policy as enunciated by Air Marshal

Noor Khan in June this year has specifically said that the mother tongue would be the medium of instructions in all areas, except those of former Punjab and Bahawalpur, where Urdu would continue to be the medium. The lovers of Punjabi have demanded that such flagrant discrimination against the language of three crore Pakistanis must be ended forthwith. They have further demanded that option should be given to high schools to impart education in Punjabi if they so desire. The creation of separate Punjabi department in the Punjab University and a special directorate of the Government for the propagation of the Punjabi language has also been suggested.

More significant than even these demands are some of the names among the petitioners. They include wellknown Urdu poets, like Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Qayum Nazar, Habib Jalil, Sufi Tabbasum, Abdul Majid Bhatti, and Farigh Bukhari."

The same correspondent further writes :—

"The association of such persons with the Punjabi movement would indicate that it was no longer confined merely to a group of writers and intellectuals. The fact that important trade union leaders such as Mirza Ibrahim and comrade Fazal Illahi Qurban and two topmost lawyers like Malik Aslam Hayat, President of the High Court Bar Association, have joined the movement, is a further proof of its inherent strength. Some of the protagonists of Punjabi have gone further than the mere demand for its being given a proper place in the educational setup. There is a considerable support for the demand that Punjabi should be the medium of official work at least at the district level.

The Punjabi movement is expected to gain further impetus with the dismemberment of one unit in West Pakistan. It is now taken for granted that the restoration of old provinces is only a matter of time. Once the political identity of the old Punjab is restored it would become extremely difficult for the rulers to deny Punjabi its proper place."

The new Punjab has suffered much for finding due place for Punjabi in the new setup in India. Therefore, it should be

very much interested in the development of Punjabi in the neighbouring country. With friendship between the two countries, India and Pakistan, and consequent increase in communication and trade between the two, the new Punjab would be able to contribute something to the growth and development of Punjabi in that country.

Even otherwise, the Sikhs, as such, should have a special and particular role in bringing the Hindus and the Muslims in this sub-continent nearer each other. The Sikh religion in its inception was a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam and in its basic concept, it was closer to Islam than Hinduism, though it remained embroiled in Hindu ritual and social affinities. All the same the Khalsa had been created to bridge the gulf between the two and there is no reason why the Sikhs should not play that role.

There is no doubt that in the present Parliamentary form of Government in the country, there is every likelihood of different parties ruling the States and a different party heading the Central Administration. This development has come to the forefront after the elections of 1967. The State Governments in such conditions have no direct voice in the Administration at the Centre, and it is for that reason that differences have arisen between the non-Congress State Governments and the Union Congress Government. These differences are bound to increase unless a solution is found. Whatever be the future setup of the Federation—it may become the confederation of India—measures are to be adopted to see that representatives of the State Governments have direct participation in the Central Government. This has set many leading politicians and statesmen in the country thinking, and views have been expressed in that regard by different persons. It has come to be admitted that the Union Government should be such wherein the State Governments should have their representatives as participants for two obvious reasons; firstly, they should have a direct say in the running of the day-to-day administration of the Centre in the subjects entrusted to the Centre; secondly, such participation will diminish many of the difficulties and causes of conflict between the Centre and the

States on many points, and the states will not be able to exploit the situation to the advantage of the party in power there by throwing all the blame on the Centre for lapses in the administration. What shape the federation or confederation of India should take is an issue for consideration. It must, of course, be accepted that the Indian Government must be a loose federation and the powers of the State must be increased to adjust ourselves with the help of our past experience. It is a wrong assumption that a Presidential democracy is always unitary, while Parliamentary democracy is federal. This assumption is absolutely incorrect. Australia claims to have a federal Government, but everybody knows that all power rests with the Union Government there, and it is, in fact, if not in form, a unitary administration. On the other hand, U.S.A. has the Presidential Form of Government, but the States have far more powers than the constituent units have in Canada, Australia, or even in India. India must have a federal Government with as little power with the Centre as it can be agreed to mutually, but it must be such wherein the State Government representatives should have a direct say and that can only be in the Presidential form of democracy. What future shape this federal Government of India takes depends on the review which is likely to be made of the Constitution of India in the near future. The New State of Punjab and also the State of Jammu and Kashmir through their true representatives can contribute a great deal in that regard.

There is no denying the fact that the New Punjab Government is confronted with many of problems of diverse nature, and that such problems, internal and external, national and international, are likely to increase, but there is no reason why with the intelligent strengthening of the organisation of the Sikhs' party, making it more broadbased, attracting young talent, capacity and experience to its ranks and adopting intelligent and foresighted policies, the State should not grow from strength to strength, and play an effective role in the comity of the States in this sub-continent.

PUNJABI SUBA ZINDABAD

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