

IF BOUNDARY DRAWN IS NOT NATURAL IT WILL PUT THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF THE PEOPLE OF INDIA IN GREAT JEOPARDY

New Delhi, July 20, 1947.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, in a statement today said that the partition of the Punjab and Bengal was not a local problem to be left to the people of these two provinces, but an "All-India problem" for it involves the fixation of the Frontiers of Pakistan and India and must be determined primarily by "considerations of facility of defence and administration."

Dr. Ambedkar said: "From the reports of controversies going on in the newspapers regarding the fixation of the boundary line between the West Punjab and the East Punjab and between West Bengal and East Bengal and of the gist of the memoranda submitted to the Boundary Commission by the Muslims and Non-Muslims, it becomes clear that the results of the Boundary Commission may be disastrous to the country.

"In the first place, the problem is treated as though it was local problem, to be left to the people of the Punjab and Bengal to fight among themselves. In the second place, the problem is regarded by the local people as one of land-grabbing. In this scramble for land, a frantic search is being made to find out Muslim enclaves in Non-Muslim areas and Non-Muslim enclaves in Muslim areas with a view to push the national boundaries backwards and forwards and to bring as many Muslims from Non-Muslim area to Muslim area and as many Non-Muslims from Muslim area to Non-Muslim area.

"Both these methods of approach are, to my mind, wrong and misleading. The shifting of national boundaries with reference to enclaves could have been justified if it was accepted that Pakistan and Hindustan should be homogeneous states. This has, however, not been the basis of partition, as is clear from the fact that neither the Congress nor the Muslim League has stipulated for transfer of population. No matter how the national boundaries are chopped and changed, a large number of Non-Muslims will remain in Pakistan and an equally large number of Muslims will remain in

India. Consequently, the attempt to shift boundaries merely to include more of one's fellow members is, I think, utterly misdirected.

Defence

Secondly, the problem would have been local, if Pakistan and India were not two Sovereign Independent States. The fact, however, is that they are, and each will have to defend itself against encroachment or invasion, should an occasion arise.

In this view of the matter, the partition of the Punjab and Bengal is not a local problem but an all-India problem, for it involves the fixation of the frontiers of Pakistan and India and must be determined primarily by considerations of facility of defence and administration.

In the light of these considerations, the Government of Pakistan and that of India would not only be the proper parties before the Boundary Commission, but they will be the necessary parties. The boundaries between Pakistan and India being the frontiers of India, it was for the Defence Department of the Government of India to have insisted that the Boundary Commission should have military officers as-assessors which is always done in the settlement of frontiers between two States.

Not only has the Defence Department of the Government of India failed to do so, it has not even cared to appear before the Boundary Commission to present the case from defence and administration points of view. It seems to have forgotten that the maintenance of the frontier will not be the responsibility of the East Punjab or West Bengal. From first to last, it will be the responsibility of the Government of India and it was, therefore, the primary concern of the Defence Department to have its say in the fixation of the frontiers.

Natural Boundaries

No one can deny that from the point of view of defence and administration, boundaries between Pakistan and India must be natural boundaries, *i.e.* they must run along a river or a

mountain. From the nature of contentions raised in the memoranda submitted to the Boundary Commission, it is clear that these factors will not receive the considerations they deserve.

They are slurred over and not even mentioned. The danger is that the frontiers between Pakistan and India that are likely to emerge from the labours of the Boundary Commission, however, satisfactory they may be from the standpoint of the communities immediately affected, will be most unsatisfactory from the point of view of India.

If my fears come true and the boundary drawn by the Commission is not a natural one, it needs no prophet to say that its maintenance will cost the Government of India very dearly and it will put the safety and security of the people of India in great jeopardy. I hope, therefore, that late as it is, the Defence Department will bestir itself and do its duty before it is too late." —A.P.I." ¹

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1.: The Free Press Journal, dated 21st July 1947.