THE JANA SANGH IN POWER

The fourth General Election, held in February 1967, did not return any single party to power, but the Congress and the Akali Dal emerged as major political parties which were hoping to form a popular Government with the support of other parties (the Jana Sangh, C.P.I., C.P.M., the Socialists, the Republicans and independents). In this election, the Congress had bagged 48 seats, but the anti-Congress sentiment was so strong that it failed to enlist the support of some independents and the Republican Party members to form a ministry. Also the Congress party was divided among itself with various factions in it. It was only on March 6, 1967, that the legislative group elected Gian Singh Rarewala as its leader. It was trying hard to buy up enough independents to form a majority, but the decision of the high command that the support of other members would be welcomed but they would not be taken
as members of the party, debarred the entry of outsiders. The Congress President and the Home Minister okayed the plan to install a Congress–Patiala coalition with the Maharaja of Patiala as the chief minister. But Mrs. Indira Gandhi vetoed the whole thing as Patiala was not acceptable to the Swaran Singh faction. Thus the Congress efforts to persuade Maharaja Patiala to become a candidate for the office of the chief minister on its support failed. In that way the mutual distrust among leaders of the Congress and confusion at the level of the Centre leadership did not allow the Congress party to form the government.

Both the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal had different interests and goals in mind. During the period of the Akali agitation for Punjabi Suba, the Jana Sangh had opposed the formation of the Suba. During the 1967 election, the Jana Sangh maintained its anti Suba posture. When Balraj Madhok, President of the All India Jana Sangh, visited Punjab in September 1966 he stated that while the Jana Sangh did not bracket the Akali Dal with the "anti-national" Parties like "the Reds and Muslim league", the Jana Sangh would not enter into any electoral alliance or adjustment with it for, the Punjab Jana Sangh leaders had decided not to do so. Moreover, some other organizations of the Hindus like the Arya Samaj were not in favour of any alliance with the Akalis, fearing that it would lead to the Jana Sangh compromising the interests of the Hindus and Hindi. On the other hand, the extremists in the
ranks of the Akalis, particularly those propagating the "Sikh home land" concept, were against currying favour with the Jana Sangh. In an article, Hari Singh Shergill wrote in 'Spokesman', "It is an impardonable affront and insult to Sikhs' inherent traditional patriotism for anyone to equate Akalis with the Jana Sangh and Arya Samajists." The two communist parties and the S.S.P. were equally opposed to any understanding or common front with the Jana Sangh in the early stages. Besides these, there were several other difficulties in the formation of the 'United Front' Government. The Akali Dal (Sant) with a solid support of 24 members had set its heart on power. Despite persuasion by Basant Singh, General Secretary of Punjab Swatantra Party, the Maharaja of Patiala was not acceptable to Sant Fateh Singh as well as to the communists. The other big stumbling block was the widely differing ideologies of the Jana Sangh and the communists. The Jana Sangh was doubtful if the opposition will be able to solve the people's intricate problems. In these circumstances, President's rule was inevitable, but the exigencies of the circumstances compelled the non-Congress parties and independents to form the 'People's United Front' on 23rd March 1967.

The factors which played a pivotal role in the formation of the 'People's United Front' were the impact of the reorganization of the Punjab on the electoral and political prospects of political parties in the new Punjab; the decline of the
Congress party; the anti-Congress stance of the non-Congress parties; initiative of the Akali Dal; and its desire to get power.

The Akali Dal (Sant), and more especially Sant Fateh Singh, took all the initiative and played the leading role in bringing together the non-Congress parties to form the United Front and the Jana Sangh-Akali alliance. The initial talks were held at Ludhiana on February 26, 1967 between Gurnam Singh (Akali Dal) and Basant Singh (Swatantra) with the Jana Sangh leaders Y.D. Sharma (Secretary of all-India Jana Sangh) and Baldev Prakash (President of the Punjab Jana Sangh) in which they agreed to form a Government. On the same day the executive of the Communist party took the decision to form a popular non-Congress Government.

On February 28, 1967 Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, General Secretary of the Jana Sangh announced the Central Parliamentary Board's decision that the party would not "enter into any coalition". In fact, it would try to thwart all attempts of the Congress to form Governments in States where the Congress had failed to win a clear majority. In all such states it would try to help opposition parties to form non-Congress Governments.

The Akali Dal had appointed a seven man sub-committee to carry on talks with opposition parties. On March 1, 1967, a meeting was held between the top leaders of the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal (Sant) at Khanna and as a result of discussion complete accord was reached between them. The Jana Sangh had agreed to share power with the Akalis due to its anti-Congress stance and a desire to broaden the outlook of the Akalis so that
they may not be confined to the Punjab problems alone but look upon the national problems also. The two formulated a common minimum programme which included: (i) Provision of a clean administration; (ii) checking of rise in prices; (iii) making Punjab a strong and prosperous State; (iv) exemption from land revenue for holding up to five acres; (v) smaller tax burden for cities; (vi) an increase in agricultural production by giving incentives to farmers; (vii) rehabilitation of trade and industry in this border State.¹⁰

Thereafter, the Akali Dal (Master), the two communist parties, the Republican Party, the S.S.P. and six independents also assured their support although they were mostly strange bedfellows with no common ideas or policies. Each political party had reasons of its own in the context of the Punjab situation to join hands with the Akali Dal (Sant) in forming a United Front ministry. None of these political parties had even a remote chance to form a Government of their own. The communist parties, even when united, had never secured 10 per cent of the seats in the Punjab vidhan Sabha. The Jana Sangh could never hope to have a majority even if it could win in all the Hindu-majority constituencies. The S.S.P., the P.S.P. and the Swatantra Party simply did not count for anything in the Punjab; they did not have any base. The Republicans were divided and generally opportunistic.¹¹

On March 4, 1967, the "Peoples United Front" was formed at an important meeting held at Khanna which was attended by seven opposition parties and six independents.¹² Gurnam Singh was
chosen the leader of the 'Peoples United Front' and an eleven point programme was finalized. These points were:

Provision of a clean and good administration to the State; (ii) control of the rising prices of essential commodities; (iii) exemption of land revenue on holdings up to five acres of land; (iv) rehabilitation and development of industry and trade; (v) raising of food production by providing incentives to the peasants; (vi) tax relief in urban areas; (vii) amelioration of the lot of the Scheduled castes and other backward classes and distribution of cultivable surplus land to the landless; (viii) betterment of the emoluments and living conditions of the Government employees; (ix) appointment of a tribunal to investigate all charges of corruption and nepotism against high-ups; (x) imposition of sales tax at the source and lessening the hardships being experienced by the trading community under the inspection rule; and (xi) guarantee of adequate wages, dearness allowance, and better working condition for the workers.

It is needless to emphasize here that the coming together of parties having contradictory ideology was motivated by one common denominator — hatred of the Congress. During the election of 1967 the Congress was dethroned from power and United Front ministry was formed in Bihar province. This gave the opportunity to the various opposition leaders to sit together and evolve a common minimum programme for forming a government. This climate also had its repercussion on Punjab politics. The Akalis and the Jana Sangh who had been working on two different
and opposite wave lengths were compelled by the force of circumstances to sit together to chalk out a common programme. One of the motivations for the Sangh to join the Akali seems to be that the leadership thought that while in Government they would serve better the cause of Hindi and Hindus.

Why the Jana Sangh Opted for the Coalition Governments?

On March 4, 1967, a complete accord was reached among the non-Congress parties to form a United Front Ministry of which the Jana Sangh was the constituent. A pertinent question arises as to what made the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal to join hands for they were generally regarded as anti-theitical political parties. Both had a communal approach to political problems, one represented the communal Hindu viewpoint and the other the communal Sikh viewpoint. There was a wide gap between the policies and ideologies of both. The Jana Sangh stood for unitary form of government with decentralizing of powers. The Akali Dal was in favour of federal form of government with a greater autonomy to the states. It was the anti-Congress stance of the opposition parties that pressed them to come closer. The Congress had antagonised all sections of society. The Jana Sangh could stay out of the coalitions but at the risk of being branded as an ally of the Congress. It would also fail to reap any credit for any improvement made by other opposition parties. On the other hand, the advantage of keeping aloof would be that the Jana Sangh would not be saddled with responsibility if the coalition failed to improve the situation and would also be able to exert its independent position. However, it was not a new chapter in the history of the Jana Sangh-Akali relations.
In the past the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal had been co-operating with each other many a time. In 1952, the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal along with K.M.P.P. Scheduled castes Federation and a few independents contested the first vidhan sabha election in PEPSU together as a United Front.¹⁷ In 1964, a United Front of non-Communist parties had been formed.

The General body of the Punjab Jana Sangh gave its approval to the United Front Ministry on March 5, in a bid to form a stable government. In a resolution the Working Committee consented to the formation of the 'People's United Front' in Punjab. It felt that this would augur amity and good relations among various sections of society.¹⁸ The General Council of the Jana Sangh which met in New Delhi on 21 to 23 April 1967, endorsed the coalition policy of the Punjab Jana Sangh and stated that the non-Congress governments should in the first instance concentrate their attention on the four-fold programme of remedying the food problem, increasing agricultural production by trying to bring water to every field, eliminating corruption, and effecting economy in administration.

A.B. Vajpayee said, "the Jana Sangh decision was promoted by a desire to bring relief to the common man oppressed by twenty years of Congress misrule."¹⁹ The Jana Sangh had joined the 'Peoples United Front' to pre-empt the Congress from office and to provide a clean administration. To achieve this object, it was willing to accept the Maharaja of Patiala or Maj-General
Rajinder Singh as Chief Minister. The Jana Sangh with its support structure limited only to the urban Hindus could hope to form a government in the Punjab by itself. Vajpayee said, "We want power otherwise what are we in politics for". According to Krishan Lal Mami, "option open to us was either to join the coalition government with communists sitting beside us, or to allow the Congress to continue in power with 35 per cent of votes." Hit Abhilashi attributed the alignment to "the people’s dissatisfaction with the Congress and their desire for a change."

Broadly speaking four factors made the entry of the Jana Sangh into the coalition government — anti Congress upsurge; political power in the State; accommodation with the Akalis on various issues including the language and Chandigarh issue; termination of the psychological atmosphere prevailing at that time. It will be quite interesting to state here why the Akalis who were diametrically opposed to the Jana Sangh and the communists thought of forming the government with them.

Why the Akali Dal opted for the Coalition Governments?

The political situation whetted by the visible decline of the Congress Party as well as by the intense anti-Congress stance of the opposition parties, encouraged the Akalis to play a dominant role for better political rewards. As a result of the election of 1967 a political vacuum was created and the Akalis came forward to fill this vacuum along with other groups.
In brief the Akali Dal had three major factors in mind while initiating talks with other parties to form coalition governments: to oust the Congress Party; desire to rule; and to improve Hindu Sikh relations and mellow down communal tension.22

The Akali Dal emerged the second largest party in the assembly. To step in power, it had to shake hands either with the Congress or the Jana Sangh which had a considerable strength in the assembly. Its efforts to count on the Congress support in 1966 and in the beginning of 1967 proved futile. Moreover, the Akali Dal was of the opinion that the Congress was its enemy number one because it was its political rival. The Akalis were inclined to associate with the Jana Sangh because the Congress did not challenge their power in the Gurudwaras. Hence, to play a dominant role and to achieve communal harmony it turned towards the Jana Sangh, Surjeet Singh Barnala said, "It was Sant Fateh Singh's leadership and his keen desire for communal harmony which brought the two parties together." Badal said, "Anti Congress stand and achieving communal harmony were the twin objectives which led the Akali leaders to work for it" and Balwant Singh described it as a "miracle" for no one could expect it even at that time. Thus both the negative and positive aspects helped the Akalis to think in terms of forming coalition government. The
negative aspect was their total dislike and hatred for the Congress and positive aspect was maintenance of communal harmony. Its partnership with the Jana Sangh meant that the Akali Dal would be the senior partner in the coalition government. So it set its eyes on the Jana Sangh to get its support and was successful to form the government. The other non-Congress parties and independents, keeping in view the exigencies of the time in Punjab as well as outside Punjab, came forward to form a non-Congress government.

The enthusiasm of the people was very great when on March 8, 'the People's United Front' ministry comprising of all non-Congress parties, with Gurnam Singh as Chief Minister was sworn in.

Thus, the exigencies of the situation and not the identity of principles, programmes and policies made these disparate groups to come together and form the government. Hatred for the Congress rule working strongly at the sub-conscious level of the leaders prompted them to become sharers in the government. As the saying goes, politics makes strange bed-fellows.

The Peoples' United Front Ministry and Its Achievements (March 8, to November 22, 1967)

In the United Front Ministry, Baldev Prakash became the Deputy-Chief Minister holding the finance portfolio. Later on, from Legislative Council, the Jana Sangh Krishan Lal, was sworn on 15th May as Cabinet minister holding Labour and employment
portfolio. The C.P.I.(M) did not join the ministry, but it continued to actively support the ministry. The leaders of the different factions were fully aware of the difficulties and problems ahead. They knew it well that at the level of implementation of their promises and programmes, many problems were bound to come to the surface. In order to meet the situation and streamline the working of the coalesing parties a co-ordination committee was formed. Some of the problems visualised by them were defection from its ranks, personal ambitions of legislators, differences among its constituent parties over matters of policy and the worst of all, the power struggle inside the Akali Dal itself.

The ministry had certain achievements to its credit and the following are noteworthy:-

(i) It abolished the land revenue for holdings upto five acres.

(ii) Profession tax was abolished.

(iii) House tax and property tax had been amalgamated and reduced.

(iv) A single food zone had been established.

(v) Dearness allowance at central rates was sanctioned and recommendations of the Kothari Commission in respect of emoluments of college and school teachers were implemented.

(vi) Crop loan system was introduced which provided for the advancement of agricultural credit to farmers according to their production needs.
Communal harmony was achieved.

As a means of bringing about economy, the ministry had reduced the strength of the Public Service Commission from five to three and had avoided a lot of multiplication of jobs.

Here a few lines may be stated with regard to the achievements of the Jana Sangh members of the Government. Baldev Prakash, the finance minister, imposed no new tax. On the other hand he provided many tax relief measures such as abolition of land revenue on holdings up to five acres, abolition of the two profession taxes, one imposed by the government and the other by the Panchayat Samitis, amalgamation of house tax and property tax. For industrial development he provided "package incentives". Priority in supply of power to units in the focal points was provided and no electricity duty was charged. An outlay of Rs. 12.65 crores was earmarked for the development of roads. Whereas in the erstwhile bigger Punjab the expenditure on education in the third plan was Rs. 19.8 crores, he made provision for the new smaller Punjab alone for the fourth plan of Rs. 23.60 crores. To improve the condition of scheduled castes he proposed to spend Rs. 37.6 lakhs.

Thus the Kisan Sabha and Beopar Mandal were fully satisfied that almost all their demands had been conceded. All sections of public opinion had welcomed the tax relief provided in the new budget. Gopal Das, Chairman of the adhoc committee
of the Punjab Beopar Mandal, said that the new budget indicated that the Punjab Government had tried to understand the difficulties of traders and industrialists and had prepared a blue print for solving them too. Darbara Singh of the Congress suggested that the Government should boldly introduce land reform measures, abolish land revenue in toto and re-introduce it on the basis of income tax because no development was possible without taxation. Om Prakash Mehta, Secretary of the All India Anti Sales Tax Committee, regretted that while there was some relief regarding sales tax it should be levied only at the first stage for all items and not only a few.

Thus the finance minister, brought relief to the farmers and trading community as well as to the salaried classes. The finance minister by his skillful handling of the resources imposed no new taxes, showing thereby that within the existing tax structure not only there was no need for imposing new taxes but may reliefs could be provided to the different sections of society.

As minister for industries, he (Baldev Prakash) was also able to streamline the procedure regarding distribution of permits and quotas and provided adequate facilities, proper relief and encouragement for new industries. Taxation relief to the extent of nearly Rs.32 crores had been given to Government employees besides Rs.8.5 crores as relief. He was able to provide free medical aid to every patient earning upto Rs.300 per month. Hitherto this facility was available to people
getting up to Rs.150 every month. This was a part of the Jana Sangh’s election pledge and he was successful in fulfilling this. Profession Tax was abolished. Moreover, he won the loyalty of the services by granting dearness allowance to its employees at the Central rates. In this way, he made a niche for himself as well as for the party by the above mentioned measures.

There were labour problems created by the communists in the factories at Amritsar. Krishan Lal, labour minister, amicably settled labour disputes in the Dhariwal Woolen Mills, the O.C.M., and Rayon & Silk mills at Amritsar and Escorts Limited at Bahadurgarh. The dispute was about enhanced dearness allowance and grant of bonus. Following an assurance that the State would guarantee the minimum wages under the factory Acts, he was able to get the dharma of brick kiln workers in Ludhiana district suspended. Thus, there was improvement in labour situation. In the three months from April to June there were strikes only in about a dozen factories and the number of men days lost was 84,021 as against 8,64,000 during the correspondence period of 1965. Again 42 persons were arrested in labour agitations as against 1,828 in the corresponding period of 1965 and 182 in that of 1966 when Congress was in power. No doubt, Krishan Lal admitted the need for higher wages but he was also conscious of the difficulties of the industry. In this border state he asserted that “the cost of raw material is higher and margin of profit much lower that those of their counterparts in Bombay.” So he opposed the issue of an ordinance for an
increase in the wages of workers. Thus as an urban-based party of businessmen the Jana Sangh provided liberal aid to the recession hit industries. He also accepted the principle of linking dearness allowance with the cost of living index in industry. In this way he did a lot of work for the industries.

The above data shows that comparatively peace was maintained in the industrial sphere. The wages of the workers were enhanced. The minister, it appears, handled his job very efficiently and belied the belief that only an industrialization of communistic leanings could better the lot of workers.

Other achievements of the party were as follows:

1. The Jana Sangh had pledged to the people not to increase the tax burden. Not only was this pledge adhered to but during the United Front regime tax relief totaling over Rs. 35 crores was given to the people without encroaching on the budget estimates.

(ii) It ended the indiscriminate police repression on workers in industrial disputes.

(iii) It was able to win the municipal elections held in October 1967. In this election it not only retained the Batala municipality but also annexed the Amritsar Municipality from the Congress and in Hoshiarpur, it gained a sufficient strength. Its political gains were the greatest of all the political parties as it got 82 seats. All this success was due to its achievements made during the United Front Government.
The Jana Sangh was able to get its demand of Hindi as a national language endorsed by the Akalis.

Communal harmony was achieved. When in Calcutta, a Gurudwara along with the Holy Granth was burnt, Yagya Dutt Sharma of the Jana Sangh along with Akali MPs rushed to Calcutta. Madhok said 'United Front in Punjab had achieved much success particularly in lessening the tension between various committees.' Deen Dayal Upadhayaya said, 'Coalition government had served the purpose in the Punjab and the results were "extremely satisfactory". The Jana Sangh-Akali Coalition was not only a coalition of two political parties but also the coalition of two communities and the unity of Hindus and Sikhs would continue and would be strengthened even if the front ministry went out of power..... The days of fighting between Hindus and Sikhs were over for ever and this must be well understood by those who had ruled the State for 20 years.'

The resilience and the spirit of co-operation and accommodation between the Jana Sangh and the Akalis made things run smoothly. Both felt that they were furthering their own cause without creating any bitterness or confrontation. The ministry, though shortlived, was a true lesson in democracy where the spirit of give and take and of mutual trust and confidence prevailed. Again, certain narrow views were put behind in the broad interests of the State.

Before proceeding further it may be necessary to write a few words about the Jana Sangh leaders as Parliamentarians. The
Jana Sangh leaders like Baldev Prakash, Lal Chand Sabherwal and Krishan Lal were not only efficient administrators but they earned great recognition also as parliamentarians. When there was a great hue and cry in the legislative assembly about the status of Hindi, Baldev Prakash kept the Akalis in good humour while not yielding ground in any way on the Jana Sangh stand on Hindi. Again to please the Hindi lovers he asserted that "there is no danger to Punjabi or to Hindi. Both would get their due place. Punjab is a bilingual state and Punjabi is the official language. Due protection would be given to Hindi." Similarly, Lal Chand Sabherwal said that the Jana Sangh was never opposed to Punjabi and had always demanded replacement of Urdu by Punjabi. He further said that the language issue did not pose any problem. On the issue of Chandigarh, Krishan Lal said that it was a part and parcel of Punjab and it was the united demand of the Punjab. In order to retain power the Jana Sangh had to work with its formidable opponents, the Akalis, and therefore gradually and unobtrusively it reoriented its policies on certain important issues like language and Chandigarh.

**Co-ordination and Tensions in the Ministry**

But because of certain basic and fundamental differences, and human nature being what it is, some difference and tensions were found to rise. Thus there was both tension and co-ordination going on between the Akalis and the Jana Sangh.
Co-ordination

The relations between the Jana Sangh and the Akali-Dal during the 'Peoples United Front' remained cordial because Yagya Dutt Sharma and Sant Fateh Singh were in frequent consultations on Party matters, and whenever a dispute occurred both leaders discussed the issue together to defuse the situation. The Jana Sangh was protecting the interests of Hindi and the Akali Dal was promoting the cause of Punjabi. Leadership of both the political parties remained firm despite criticism and attacks from extremists in both the parties. Punjabi was recognised as the State language with Hindi as a link language. The Jana Sangh had no objection to the introduction of Punjabi as the language of administration at the Secretariat level but it wanted that some forms and other stationery should be printed in Hindi as well. It was also accepted that all replies to communications received in Hindi would be answered in Hindi. This moderate language policy came in for severe criticism at the hands of the extremists in both the parties. The Akali Dal (Master group) wanted to introduce Punjabi at all levels as soon as possible, whereas Arya Samajists organised a 'Save Hindi Samiti'. They held that Punjab was a bilingual state and adopted a resolution demanding adequate safeguards for linguistic minorities of Punjab as 40 per cent of the people had accepted Hindi as their mother tongue.

Tensions in the Ministry

The law and order situation began deteriorate because
some of the unruly people of the urban areas did not want
to submit to the dictates of their own Government. The prices
of essential commodities were rising. Harijans were unhappy
and dissatisfied with the Jana Sangh-Akali Coalition and above
all, none of the constituents of the United Front except Akali
Dal (Sant) was satisfied with its performance. The Parties or
groups in the Front were consolidating their political positions.
The principle of uniformity of purpose and action was almost
absent in it. The communists in particular, were exploiting
their position in the ministry for achieving political ends
regardless of the interests of the people or the State. The
Jana Sangh did not get on well with the C.P.I. as there were
fundamental differences between them on labour issues. Both
accused each other for strikes in various factories of the
industrial town of Amritsar. Sat Pal Dang (C.P.I.) was in favour
of raising the minimum wage in view of the high cost of living,
while Baldev Prakash and Krishan Lal were of the view that
fixation of minimum wage must take into consideration the capacity
of the industry to pay and they opposed the issuing of an ordinance
to increase the wages of the workers which was not in conformity
with its election promises. They felt that industry in the
state had already suffered a lot due to recession as well as
the 1965 war with Pakistan. The Jana Sangh leaders were thus
greatly distressed that the communists leaders of Amritsar in
particular were trying to damage the industries of the border
district. The Socialists and the Republican Party of India
members were not satisfied with the Front Ministry's performance and threatened to resign if their demands were not met within a specific time limit.

On the other hand relations between the Jana Sangh and Lachman Singh, the Akali education minister, started straining over the language issue. Gill was extremely keen on making Punjabi the sole official language of the State at the earliest possible time, while the Jana Sangh ministers vehemently opposed this. Apart from this, Gill had a personal ambition to be the Chief Minister. To his good luck, Rarewala, who felt that the Congress had no chance whatsoever of forming a Government so long as the coalition lasted, joined hands with Gill to topple the Gurnam Singh ministry which fell on November 22, 1967, when Gill defected with 16 other M.L.A.s of the Peoples' United Front. Thus the Jana Sangh which formed the United Front with the Akalis stood by its promise but the Akali Dal broke under its own weight.

The views of Vir Partap are worth quoting in this matter:- Firstly, the Jana Sangh had betrayed the cause of Hindi and Hindus in the Punjab. Secondly, the Jana Sangh had made a humiliating surrender to the Akali Dal for a few ministerial posts in the cabinet. Thirdly, the Jana Sangh had gone back on its own part.
Fourthly, how could the Jana Sangh reconcile its previous stand that the Hindus in the Punjab constitute a linguistic minorities with its present position that the Punjab is a unilingual state and there are no linguistic minorities in the state. The Akali Dal had not changed its position, it is only the Jana Sangh which gone back from its work.28-A

Regarding language policy of the Jana Sangh, the Hindi Milap critically remarked:- The Jana Sangh had never followed an honest policy regarding language in Punjab, when it found that the Hindi lovers are with it, it started agitations in favour of Hindi. But when it found politically useful it began to support Punjabi. The language policy of the Jana Sangh is neither in favour of Hindi or in favour of Punjabi. This party never explained boldly and fearlessly its language policy.28-B

The peoples' United Front which remained in office for 8 months and 13 days worked well. The United Front Ministry had worked on the whole as a team and had secured the much needed communal and linguistic harmony in this strategically important border state of India. The administration was also sound and the services felt generally secure. Food prices stabilized and a buffer stock of foodgrains had been built. The State Government contributed more than its quota to the Central pool at reasonable prices. For all these reasons, and more especially for holding out the hope of communal harmony and a noticeable absence of
nepotism and corruption, the Gurnam Singh ministry was deservedly popular. Its leaders had publicly announced that their object was to work for Hindu-Sikh Unity.29

The Second Jana Sangh-Akali Coalition Government

February 17, 1969 to March 27, 1970

After the fall of the Lachman Singh Gill ministry, midterm elections were ordered to be held in February 1969. The Akali and the Jana Sangh made an electoral pact on the eve of the election. The Jana Sangh-Akali alliance got majority of seats. In a meeting at Amritsar which was attended by their top leaders, both the political parties reached a complete accord and the Jana Sangh-Akali government was formed. Both the political parties had made a decision on the basis of their political interests and the Jana Sangh had impressed on the Akali Dal that nothing should be done to damage the image of Hindu Sikh Unity, and, all efforts should be made to give a clean administration to the State. Gurnam Singh became the chief minister on February 17, 1969 and Tandon the Deputy Chief Minister. He was incharge of the industry ministry. Krishan Lal of the Jana Sangh was a finance and Labour minister. On September 17, a third Jana Sangh leader, Man Mohan Kalia, joined the cabinet. He was given the portfolio of local bodies. Although the C.P.I., C.P.M., F.S.P., S.S.P. and the Swatantra Party had not joined the Government, they supported it from outside which/ the words of Pavate, the Governor "was just an expression of goodwill on their part towards the new ministry and did not mean much in Parliamentary Politics." The ten-point
programme announced by the Jana Sangh-Akali Ministry included inter-alia preservation of communal harmony, clean and efficient administration, amelioration of backward (including Scheduled) classes, welfare of ex-servicemen and Government pensioners, maximum production of electricity, securing Chandigarh exclusively for Punjab, as well as the Bhakra complex and certain Punjabi-speaking areas outside the State. A co-ordination committee comprising the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal was set up in March, 1970 to resolve differences between the two parties.

The Jana-Sangh-Akali Coalition had certain achievements to its credit such as:

1. Loans worth 369 crores were given to the farmers for installation of tubewells, purchase of fertilizer, tractors and pesticides etc.;
2. Pay Scales of Local-bodies employees were revised.
3. Security of service to the teaching and non-teaching staff working in privately managed recognised aided schools was provided.
4. It provided housing loans for its employees.
5. It linked the workers wages with the consumer price index.
6. Legislative Council was abolished.
7. It provided a tentative relief of Rs.10 to Rs.15 per month to its pensioners.
8. It curbed the activities of the naxalites.
9. Hindu-Sikh unity was maintained.
It will be of interest to mention here some of the achievements of the Jana Sangh members of the Government. Krishan Lal, the finance and Labour minister, levied no new taxes in the budget though there was an overall deficit of Rs.10.94 cores left uncovered with the hope that a portion of deficit would be made up by grants-in-aid and devaluation of funds. He provided priority to agriculture. He proposed Rs.16 crores for minor irrigation loans, Rs.35 crores for crop loan system and proposed to distribute 50,000 seed fertilizer drills and 25,000 bullock driven disc harrows. He fixed a target of 24,000 tube-wells to be electrified. For the industrial development a total outlay of Rs.16.15 crores was fixed. Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Batala and Ferozepur were declared focal points to develop industry. The Punjab small scale industries corporation had given special duty to ensure the distribution of raw material. He proposed Rs.4.70 crores which would enable the construction of 300 k.m. of main highways and 1100 k.m. of village link roads.

Education

As against the provision of Rs.24 crores in 1968-69 and Rs.23.60 crores in 1967 during the United Front Government, a sum of Rs.29 crores was proposed to be spent on education during 1969-70. The number of Government open common merit scholarships was increased from 58 to 122 and rate of scholarship increased from Rs.45 to 75. Rs.10 lakh were provided for the Guru Nanak Dev University.
For the welfare of the Scheduled castes Rs. 98.54 lakh were proposed for the award of scholarships for general and industrial development. A coaching centre to prepare scheduled castes for competitive examinations had been established at Chandigarh. To build Dharamsalas/chopals a provision of Rs. 25 lakh had been made.

**Government Employees**

To remove the anomalies in the pay scales he proposed a Committee of senior officers to work in consultation with administrative departments. Distinction between B and C class offices was abolished. Pay scales of inspectors and sub-inspectors of police were also revised.

Master plans for the cities of Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana were made. Later on, as a labour minister, Krishan Lal linked the workers wages with the consumer price index.

Krishan Lal's budget received a mixed reaction. Basant Singh (Swatantra) said that it was a good attempt "to balance things". Major Harinder Singh, leader of the Congress opposition, said that he was glad that there were no taxes in the budget. But Satpal Dang, leader of the C.P.I. group in the Vidhan Sabha, described the budget as disappointing for the common man. Whereas Kapur Singh, senior Vice-President of the ruling Akali Dal, described the budget as "insipid and flavourless. There is more of the Jana Sangh and less of the Akali Dal in the recipe."

The budget gave a practical shape to the Jana Sangh-Akali stand. Krishan Lal, the finance minister did his best to be fair to all the sections, both urban and rural. Employees and pensioners, teachers and students and labourers and industrial-
lists were happy. The harmony and understanding of both the parties was duly reflected in the harmonious development of various sections and sub-sections of society. It need not be mentioned here a tax free budget during the period of rising prices and cost of living was a great achievement. The abolition of the legislative council, no doubt where the majority were the Congressmen was not done as a political vendetta but as a matter of economy. It seems that the women in the budget did not receive due attention. Moreover, no major thrust was made towards the industrialization of the State. Further, no concrete proposal was made for the employment of the unemployed youth.

Balramji Das Tandon, the industry minister, provided incentives in the form of tax relief, facility for purchase of land on instalment basis, and other benefits at three focal points. He was also able to get the sanction of the Union Government to establish new starch, glucose and nylon factories in the State.

The ten point programme of the coalition, which has already been mentioned, was given a practical shape by the Jana Sangh ministers. Thus their promises were fulfilled. Not only the Jana Sangh but the Akalis also were very earnest in fulfilling whatever they had promised to the people during the elections. It is very common that political parties make tall claims before elections and fail to fulfill them later on. But the Jana Sangh-Akali Government was an exception to this rule.

On the deficit side it may be said that the Jana Sangh
had failed in dispensing justice to the Harijans in the State. The Jana Sangh High Command was sore about it but the Jana Sangh members of the Punjab government were handicapped in this matter though the Harijans had no security in the rural areas. They failed because it was an Akali dominant government whose supporters had forcibly occupied the land meant for Harijans. It failed to maintain law and order in the State for which it had been pleading since 1952. It also failed to electrify every village, to install industry in rural areas, to pay bonus to the roadways employees and to provide each Panchayat a dispensary. The fulfilment of these promises required time, but as the Jana Sangh remained in office for a short-time, it could not do much about all this.

Tensions in the Ministry

The relations between the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal were not cordial due to lack of understanding between the two parties on certain issues. The Jana Sangh had charged the Akali Dal with not honouring the basic commitments made at the time of formation of the coalition government. The controversy between the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal on the issue of the medium of instruction in Private aided schools deserves special attention. The Jana Sangh Working Committee held that Man Mohan Kalia would not join the Punjab Cabinet and threatened to quit the coalition government unless the issue was resolved. Baldev Prakash emphatically declared "one thing is clear if the Akali Dal does not accept our stand in principle that aided schools were given the right to choose between Hindi and Punjabi, we will not remain in
the cabinet. It was only on 15 September 1969 that the crisis was finally resolved when the Punjab chief minister conceded the Jana Sangh demand for freedom in the choice of medium of instruction in the State Government aided Private Schools. The Jana Sangh had accepted the principle of unilingualism. Sachar Formula was scrapped and three language formula was adopted. In fact, the differences between the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal were patched up only on March 13, 1970 when the Akali Dal agreed that milestones and name plates would be written in Punjabi/Hindi.

Another point of irritation was the slogan of Sikh homeland raised occasionally by some Sikh legislatures. This upset the Jana Sangh leadership and naturally they resisted it and asked the Akali leadership to bridle its members. Keeping in view the determined opposition of the Sangh, the Akali Party took strong action against those member like Kapoor Singh who raised the issue of Sikh homeland by turning them out of the Party. Thus, the Akalis saved themselves from an embarrassing situation and the Jana Sangh got a morale booster.

March 25, 1970, was an eventful day in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha. Early in the day, Gurnam Singh, leader of the Akali Party in the Vidhan Sabha and Chief Minister of the State, failed to get approval of the house for the appropriation bill. In the fastmoving developments, the Akali Party withdrew support to him. Gurnam Singh tried to woo the Congress party but could not get the required support from it. In fact, the rift in the Akali camp had been simmering for some time and came to the fore now. His condemnation of Sant Fateh Singh brought
his instant ouster from the party itself. The Akali Party instantly moved to oust him and elected Badal as his successor. Badal was able to prove his majority in the Vidhan Sabha with the support of the Jana Sangh which continued to be in his coalition government. Ariel in his Sunday Standard of March 29, had this to say: "Governments are usually toppled by the opposition. In Punjab, a Chief Minister has been toppled by his own government." The Jana Sangh justified its support to the Akali Dal (Sant) by affirming that the Jana Sangh was with the Akali Dal and not with any individual."

The Jana Sangh- Akali Dal Ministry
March 27, 1970 to June 30, 1970

The Akalis again formed a ministry in coalition with the Jana Sangh on March 27, 1970. Prakash Singh Badal, a liberal and moderate person, became the Chief Minister of the third Jana Sangh-Akali Coalition Government and Balram Ji Dass Tandon, the Jana Sangh leader was designated as Deputy Chief Minister (Industry Minister). Later on, Man Mohan Kalia was sworn as Cabinet Minister of Local Government on 16 April 1970. Satya Dev and Gian Chand were sworn on June 5, 1970 as cabinet ministers and Bikram Jit Singh of the Jana Sangh became the Deputy speaker. So the Jana Sangh had larger share in the Government. The coalition government adopted an eleven point programme including implementation of March 13, 1969 decisions (already mentioned) Harijan Welfare, intensive farming, eradication of corruption, rural development, blue print for the growth of industries and
fair deal to workers and government employees.

In spite of its very short duration, this government established a Harijan Welfare Board and increased the grant for various purposes. Emphasis was again laid on close Hindu-Sikh ties. The Naxalite activities were curbed. Keeping in view the proverb that charity begins at home, the Cabinet passed a resolution in favour of increasing the allowances of the members of the Legislative Assembly.

As regards the Jana Sangh achievements in the coalition government, Balram Ji Das Tandon was able to provide more facilities to industrial projects. He also put the private sector on priority consideration in the matter of setting up of new industrial projects. Other achievements of the party were:

2. Naxalite movement was curbed. Sabherwal said that the only way to end naxalities was to follow a tit for tat policy and kill those who killed others.

3. When the Panj Kaunsalis of Aival Akali Dal raised the demand for Sikh homeland, the Jana Sangh asked the Akali Dal to take stern action against those who dared to raise the demand and was successful.

Differences and Tensions in the Ministry

The Jana Sangh had always been in a dilemma regarding its relationship with the Akalis. The Akali Party embraced within itself men of different hues and views who seldom observed
party discipline. The most vocal and aggressive among them raised the slogan of Sikh homeland which upset the Jana Sangh because it could never displease its voters. It is true that with the pressure of the Jana Sangh these divergent voices became silent for some time but they were never effectively suppressed.

The law and order situation in the State was deteriorating and political interference in the administration coupled with favouritism and discrimination curtained administrative efficiency. Crime was on the increase and the respect for law and authority was fast declining. The police was being employed by the Akali leaders for personal ends which made the situation worse.

No doubt during the coalition Government, several steps were pressed into service for improving the living conditions of the Harijans and other weaker sections of society, but in fact, they enjoyed no security in rural areas and even surplus/evacuee land was not being given to them. Humiliating treatment was meted out to them and they were harrassed and victimised even in Badal's village where a wall had been built to block the entry of Harijans into the village from one particular side. The increasing interference by the Akali Jathedars in the day to day administration and the failure of the police to protect the aggrieved people made the life of the weaker sections of society insecure. The Punjab Istri Sabha had expressed its grave concern about what it called increasing acts of goondaism, rape and molestation of women in various parts of the State and fast deteriorating law and
order situation. The state of affairs was not liked by the Punj Jana Sangh leaders and its working committee in its meeting on 22 June, 1970 expressed "strong sentiments" regarding the law and order situation. Other aspects of its dissatisfaction included "political interference in the administration coupled with favouritism and discrimination, increasing political and official corruption, growing fears and victimisation in the Harijan section of the people."

This shows that the Jana Sangh felt greatly perturbed at the way of the Akali leaders' and workers' behaviour. It is interesting to note that no Akali minister or leader ever charged the Jana Sangh with either interference in the administration or corruption. The record of the Jana Sangh in these matters was clear.

The relations between the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal during this coalition government were often strained. The main cause of rift between the Jana Sangh and the Akali Dal was the controversy over the extension of the jurisdiction of the Guru Nanak Dev University at Amritsar to the districts of Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Amritsar and Gurdaspur, even before the university had equipped itself with teaching staff and teaching departments.

To be more specific, three major items of controversy on the language issue came into focus. Firstly, the non-implementation
of the nine point agreement of March 13, 1970, secondly, the non-fulfillment of the commitment made by Gurnam Singh, when he was the Chief Minister during the second coalition ministry, for the setting up of a Dayanand University at Jalandhar. Thirdly, the affiliation of 46 colleges to the Guru Nanak Dev University at Amritsar.

In fact, the quarrel was based more on ideology than on any inconvenience to students. Some diehard Akalis wanted to make Punjabi the sole medium of education in schools and colleges immediately. They believed that development of both Punjabi and Hindi as mediums of instruction in universities was detrimental to the interests of Punjabi. Hence they were not prepared to allow the use of Hindi as medium of instruction in colleges affiliated to the Punjabi and Guru Nanak Dev Universities.

On the other hand, the Jana Sangh wanted to score a political victory by having the colleges of Jalandhar district disaffiliated from Guru Nanak University as Jalandhar had a numerical majority of Hindus and it was feared that the new university would soon adopt Punjabi as the medium of instruction and in this way impose it on Hindus. The Jana Sangh and the Arya Samajists felt that with the imposition of Punjabi medium the D.A.V. institutions would lose their character. So to win the sympathy and support of the Arya Samajists, which the party had lost for its partnership with the Akalis, to pocket the Hindu votes and to protect the educational interests of the Hindus, the Punjab Jana Sangh was against the jurisdiction of
the Guru Nanak Dev University and wanted to create a Dayanand University at Jalandhar. But the Akalis would not agree to the Jana Sangh proposal that this district be retained under the jurisdiction of Punjab University, which was outside the control of the state Government. A cabinet sub committee headed by Balram Ji Das Tandon with Balwant Singh (Finance Minister) and Surjeet Singh Barnala (Education Minister) was appointed to resolve this controversy. But the committee was sharply divided and it did not hold even one formal meeting during its existence. Tandon publically confessed that "no useful purpose will be served by meeting of sub committee. The Political issue was to be decided on political level."^36

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, President of All India Jana Sangh, was hopeful of settlement. He appointed a three man committee consisting of Y.D. Sharma, Dr. Baldev Prakash and Bhai Mahavir to discuss matters with the Akali leaders. These high level parleys took place in Jagraon^37 on June 22, 1970 and participants from the Akali side included Sant Fateh Singh, Sant Chanan Singh, Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal, Balwant Singh, S.S. Bassi and Surjeet Singh Barnala. They discussed many topics including the affiliation^38 of Guru Nanak Dev University and general working of the coalition. But the meeting failed to reduce the area of disagreement between the two parties on various controversial issues, including the question of affiliation of 46 colleges to the recently established Guru Nanak Dev University.

The Akali Legislature party met at Chandigarh on June 22,
and decided "any change in the notification on university jurisdiction would give a stick to the Master Akali Dal to beat with and it would in the long run prove suicidal for the Sant Dal." 39

On June 22, the Akali Dal Working Committee met at Chandigarh under the Presidentship of Sant Fateh Singh and adopted a resolution clarifying the Party's position on this issue. The resolution was couched in very polite language but firmly endorsed the stand of the Akali Dal Assembly Party on the issue of affiliation of 46 colleges. It held that "no change was advisable." 40 It accepted Hindi as the link language and held that in the nature of things, Punjabi and Hindi both had to take their respective places without, of course, encroaching upon each other's share. Eventually, the state leaders of the Jana Sangh felt that any more association with the Akali Dal would mar their image in the public eyes.

The Central Parliamentary Board of Jana Sangh met on June 29, accepted the Punjab Unit's request to permit it to withdraw from the Akali Dal coalition. On June 30 the four ministers of the Jana Sangh resigned and decided to sit on the opposition benches but promised "selective support" to the Akali Dal Government on merits. 43 Soon this position too was changed and the Jana Sangh moved a vote of no-confidence against the ministry.

Apart from the question of Guru Nanak Dev University
jurisdiction, several other matters caused strains in the Akali Dal—Jana Sangh relationship. The Jana Sangh was extremely unhappy about the bloated size of the Punjab Government and wanted it to be normalized. The Patiala University’s decision to exclude the use of Hindi in the university not only as a compulsory language and another of its decision which made English the second language and completely debarred Hindi, proved to be the "last straw" 44. In fact Gill had complicated the problem by ordering the removal of all Hindi words from the milestones and name plates. Gurnam Singh also added to the problem by not implementing certain decisions only to please the extremists.

Sant Fateh Singh and Badal were keen to retain the Jana Sangh in the coalition and were ready to concede the Jana Sangh demand to have a separate University at Jalandhar. To resolve the tangle of affiliation, a suggestion under active consideration of the Akali Dal was to include Ferozepur district in Guru Nanak University in place of Jalandhar.

Sant Fateh Singh in a statement on July 4, deeply deplored the breakdown of the alliance, and two days later, on July 6 appealed to the Jana Sangh to reconsider its decision and rejoin the government once again. Neither the Jana Sangh leaders nor the Akali Dal legislatures were, however, ready to renew negotiations. The ministry itself was in deep crisis with almost every second Akali Legislator aspiring for a berth in the ministry.
Thus the marriage of convenience came to an end. In this whole drama sensitive issues like the place of Hindi, the jurisdiction of Guru Nanak Dev University and the occasional outbursts of some Akali diehards for Sikh home land came to the surface and were resolved only temporarily. It is true that both the political parties followed the policy of give and take in some matters but selfish motives of some Akali leaders rocked the boat of the Jana Sangh-Akali alliance.

Achievements and Failures of the Jana Sangh

A few lines regarding the credit and debit side of the Jana Sangh may be of some interest at this place. The Jana Sangh improved its position in the elections of Municipal Committees as well as the legislature and that was why it could put more pressure on the waywardness of the Akalis. It was also given sufficient representation in the ministry which worked as a morale booster for its workers and helped it to exercise sufficient control on the levers of the Government and thus initiate policies and programmes for the welfare of the common man. A very significant achievement was that the temperature of communal strife was kept low thus enabling Punjab to be peaceful and more faster on the road to development. Another notable achievement was part settlement of the language issue and the status of Hindi in different fields. It also placed checks and curbs on those Akali elements who raised occasionally the Sikh home land issue.

For a Party like the Jana Sangh with its idealistic and dedicated workers the above mentioned achievement were quite
considerable. In spite of the difficulties inherent in the
coalition, particularly with the Akali Party who had generally
not been a cohesive and monolithic party, the Jana Sangh fared
well in the Government.

On the debit side the Jana Sangh failed to get for
Hindi the status which it deserved. It also could not do much
for the establishment of a Daya Nand University at Jalandhar.
Again, as Government actions entail collective responsibility,
the acts of omission and commission were also to be shared by
the Jana Sangh leaders.

But it seems that the friendship cultivated during the
alliance period and the anti-Congress feelings among them
continued after June 30, 1970. They organized a joint massive
rally in Ludhiana to welcome Jay Prakash Narayan. Both opposed
the clamping of emergency in 1975 and the Jana Sangh extended
help to the Akali Dal in winning the bye elections held in May
1975 against the Congress.
REFERENCES

1. The numerical strength of the Political Parties was A.D. (S) 24, A.D. (M) 2, The Jana Sangh 9, C.P.I. 5, C.P.I. (M) 3, the Republican Party of India 3, the Socialist and Independents 9.

2. Congress Party was broadly divided into five groups of the 78 members of the Party included MLAs, 25 were with Swaran Singh, 21 with Darbara Singh and Mohan Lal combine, 12 with Giani Zail Singh and 10 each with Mr. Prabodh Chandra and Missafir.


4. Congress Party wanted that the Maharaja should join the Congress first without any preconditions.


8. Ibid., February 27, 1967.


12. The Akali Dal Sant, Akali Dal (Master), the Jana Sangh, the Communist Party, (right) the Communist Party (left), the Republican Party and Samyukta Socialist Party.


14. His name was proposed by Lachman Singh Gill and seconded by Baldev Prakash (J.S.) and Rajinder Singh Sparrow. (Independent).


16. It had failed to solve the food problem and curb the rising prices. Its misrule heavy-taxation, social injustice and corruption further infuriated the opposition parties.


20. Ibid. March 5, 1967.
22. Interview with Balwant Singh.
24. Ibid., September 12, and November 1, 1967.
25. Due to some reasons not known to me the concerned official of the Legislative Assembly did not allow me to consult the proceedings/debates of the Assembly sessions.
27. Ibid., May 12, 1967.
29. Pawate, D.C. My days as Governor, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi.
31. Vajpayee felt that Punjab was a unilingual state and Punjabi was its language.
32. For Rajya Sabha Sant Fateh Singh selected Santokh Singh and Gurcharan Singh as official candidates. The Akali Dal Master group nominated Giani Bhupinder Singh as Third Akali Party candidate Gurnam Singh was canvassing covertly among his personal friends in the Party for Giani Bhupinder Singh and he was elected to the Rajya Sabha. Later on Gurnam Singh was expelled from the Party on the charge that supporting Giani Bhupinder Singh against the official nominee was treachery against and betrayal of the Akali Dal.
33. The Akali Party in coalition with the Jana Sangh had 55 supporters in a house of 103.
34. Several Harijan families had been shut up helplessly in their houses in Shahidgarh village in Patiala. Entrance to their houses had been blocked in some cases with a Pucca brick wall in other cases with barbed wire fence raised in front of their houses.
35. According to 1971 Census Jalandhar had 53.91 per cent Hindus.


38. The Ordinance for the establishment of Guru Nanak Dev University at Amritsar was issued by Gurnam Singh without consulting the Cabinet a fortnight before his ouster. Hindustan Times, June 19, 1970. During the meeting at Jagraon the Jana Sangh wanted the notification should be reviewed on merits of the case without imputing communalism.


41. The Jana Sangh Parliamentary Board took the decision because of the "unwillingness" of the Akali Dal, the major partner of the ruling coalition, to consider the Jana Sangh's two minimum demands. The demands were that the Akali Dal must honour the "commitment" made by the Gurnam Singh Ministry to set up a separate University at Jalandhar for educational institutions run by the D.A.V., and that the jurisdiction of Guru Nanak University should be reconsidered and decided on merits (Hindustan Times, June 29, 1970).

42. Balram Ji Das Tondon, Man Mohan Kalia, Satya Dev and Gian Chand.

43. Organizer, July 4, 1970.

44. The Hindustan Times, June 30, 1970.