Last Chapter in Freedom Struggle
Background to Goa Satyagraha

S T Chary

BUT for the personality and popularity of Prime Minister Nehru the 'Goa Tragedy' would have cost the Government dear. People have faith in him, though they disagree with his policy on this particular issue. Probably for the first time in his life, he is confronted with challenge on a large scale. If he is too great to deviate from his convictions and principles, he is also too human to ignore the demand of the people. A born fighter for freedom, he cannot but bless other freedom fighters. That is why though mass satyagraha for the liberation of Goa is against the declared policy of the Government and Congress, he wished the Satyagrahis well.

Before examining the various aspects of the present movement for the liberation of Portuguese territories in India, it is necessary to have a broad picture of their historical, social and cultural background. Geographically, the State of Portuguese India comprises the territories of Goa, Daman and Diu with a total area of 1532 sq. miles, of which Goa accounts for 1309 sq. miles, Daman 219 sq. miles and Diu 14 sq. miles. The district of Goa is administratively divided into 11 talukas; Daman into two talukas. Daman proper and Nagar-Haveli including Dadra. The last one has already been liberated. The District of Diu constitutes a single taluka.

Low literacy

According to the 1950 census, the total population of Portuguese India was 637,591. On the basis of religion, the population distribution was: Hindus 388,488 (60.9%) Christians 234,275 (36.7%); Muslims 14,162 (2.2%); Parsees 339; Jews 50; Buddhists 56 and others 204. Of the population, 499,579 are illiterate. Of the literate, those who could read and write only in Portuguese was 1.43% while those who could do so in Indian languages was about seven times that number, viz. 10.56%. The Konkani dialect of Marathi, with a mixture of Portuguese words, is the spoken language of all nonEuropeans in Goa, Gujarati in Daman and Diu. The number of emigrants from Portuguese India who have settled in the Indian Union is estimated at about 100,000, out of whom about 80,000 are in Bombay.

According to the history of Goa' by Father M. J. Gabriel Sal dan ha, which is supposed to be a reliable book by Goans, the whole of the territory did not come under Portuguese rule at the same time. On 25th November, 1510 A.D., Alfonso-de-Albuquerque seized the city of Goa from Adil Shah, the Muslim king of Bijapur, on the pretext of protecting Hindus from him. The same year, he conquered Goa and its adjacent islands of Divar, Chorao etc. Diu fell in 1546 A.D. and Daman in 1559 A.D. The enclaves of Dadra and Nagar-Haveli came into Portuguese hands in 1779 A.D. from the Peshwa of Poona. The Novas Conquistas (New Conquests), which comprise the present talukas of Pernem, Bicholim, Satari, Ponda, Quepem and Canacona, were finally annexed towards the end of the 18th century between 1782 A.D. and 1791 A.D. This shows that four-fifths of Portuguese India, that is, 1227 sq. miles out of a total of 1532 sq. miles, were occupied and acquired by them only at the end of the 18th century.

Portuguese possessions in India are under a Governor-General residing at Panjim, now known as Nova-Goa. Goa is under his direct control, while Daman and Diu are under two Lieutenant-Governors. A Governor's Council with advisory powers assists the Governor-General in his administration. Most of the members of the Council are nominated and not elected. There is a High Court, with 5 judges and one Attorney-General. The laws in force in Portugal are enforced in the Colonies even without the formality of consultation. Nova-Goa is the capital of Portuguese India. Salazar's dictatorship was established in Portugal in the year 1926. This year is notable because from then no opinion different from that of Salazar and his stooges has been permitted either in Portugal or its colonies.

A Challenge

The Portuguese were the first of European Colonial powers to occupy this country. It took about sixty years for us to drive the British out. Congress took the initiative in this and various forms of struggle were tried under its leadership. But the technique was the same as in Goa. It took a few years more for the French to quit. It was the result of Governmental pressure as well as the people's fight. Portugal refuses to do what the other two colonial powers have done. So a struggle for the liberation of the Portuguese territories in India has become necessary to complete our freedom struggle. It is a fact that during the freedom struggle in the rest of India, Congress did not bother about Goa in the sense of conducting a parallel struggle though the subject always found a place in Congress resolutions. Of course, in those days, no one could have imagined that a situation of this kind would develop in Goa. Everybody fondly hoped that if the British were forced out, the liberation of other foreign pockets would follow in a matter of days. India has been free for some years now. Yet Goa remains under the Portuguese. Not only that, its liberation presents a challenge. It is trying the patience of the Government and the wisdom and determination of the people.

For the last 8 years, our Government has advocated and tried the policy of settling international problems by peaceful and friendly negotiation. Through a tiny colonial power, interested nations of the world are trying to put this policy to the test. From successive statements in Parliament in the last week, it seems that the Prime Minister is not only aware of it, but determined to defeat it. In reply to repeated requests from India for a peaceful and negotiated settlement of this vexed problem, Portugal has bluntly said that it does not consider its sovereignty over Goa to be a matter of dispute with India and that therefore it is not prepared to discuss its transfer with our Government. If this position is accepted, they have very magnanimously offered to give assurances and guarantees about India's territorial integrity and security!

Non-party Campaign

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oft-repeated policy of our Govern­ment, non-congress political parties have come to the conclusion that there is no likelihood of Goa being liberated now or in the near future through governmental negotiations unless some unexpected developments should supervene. And it is not wise to leave the inalienable right of freedom to chance. As Congress is the party in power, it is not in a position to express itself freely or be at variance with the policy of the Government; therefore, it cannot take the initiative and leadership for the liberation of Goa. Hence other political parties in the country, viz., the PSP, Communists, Jan Sangh, RSP etc. and a large number of Goans outside Goa, have united in the Goa Vimochan Samiti to complete the unfulfilled part of Congress work. The Satyagraha movement for the liberation of the Portuguese territories is strictly on a non-party basis. Of late, many Congressmen have joined the move­ment in their individual capacity. The rest of the happenings belong to recent history. These well-known facts have to be restated because of the mischievous allegations ab­road about the character of the movement and the composition of its leadership.

Amirchand, Thorat, Saha and a host of others did not die as mem­bers of the various class and sec­tional organisations to which they belonged; they with the flag of our nation, upholding the honour and dignity of it. Giving political and partisan colour to the freedom struggle at this stage is an insult to the martyrs who came from all parts and parties of the country. We owe it to their memory and to the truly national character of the struggle and refer to it as such and vehemently fight any propaganda contrary to it, from whichever quarter it may come. If even at this stage the Congress should accept leadership, which is not unlikely in view of the growing opinion in that direction, other parties are bound to work whole­heartedly under its guidance. Just Imagine for a moment whether it would have made any difference at all if the Communists were kept totally out of the picture. The usual "red scare" is slowly being brought into the picture by Portugal to sidetrack the main issue. It is also a sedu­lous attempt to exploit Macarthystan sentiments and effectively neutralise American sympathy for the libera­tion movement. It would be well if all concerned were warned about this in time.

If the Satyagraha is not called off, which is very unlikely in view of the growing tempo of the movement both inside and outside Goa, and the Portuguese authorities on their part continue their 'trigger-happy' methods, it is certain that a situa­tion will arise sooner than later wherein Nehru will have to decide on shooting down Indians within the land in the name of law and order or effectively prevent the Por­tuguese from shooting our peaceful and unarmed countrymen, irrespec­tive of the international complica­tions that it might lead to. If he should make up his mind soon, pre­cious lives could be saved.

Peoples Right

Knowing human nature and feel­ing as he does, it should have been clear to the Prime Minister by now that the people of this country would stand no more mass massacre of our brethren in Goa. As self-res­pecting members of a sovereign democratic republic, they demand that the Government protect the honour and lives of our fellow countrymen without further delay; and if for any reason Government fails to do that, then people will exercise their sovereign right to protect the lives of their brethren with all the means at their com­mand. This will put an end to the completely peaceful nature of the present movement: and many inno­cent lives may be lost on either side in the process. Timely State inter­vention is any day better than un­organised violence.

As the first of the proposed ad­ministrative measures against Por­tuguese iniquity, the Government of India has announced the immediate suspension of money orders and value payable service to their en­claves in India. To what extent this may upset their economy can be seen from the following:

The trade balance for Portuguese India for the year 1951 was as follows:

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<td><strong>Imports</strong></td>
<td>9,00,21,397</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exports</strong></td>
<td>2,66,02,805</td>
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<td><strong>Deficit</strong></td>
<td>6,34,18,592</td>
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This deficit is normally made good almost entirely by the cash remit­tances of Goan emigrants in India. Of course, in recent years the amount of deficit has somewhat declined owing to the increased export of mineral ores and high Import duty on goods brought for smuggling. But after the short-lived Korean War boom, the trend has come to be reversed. Besides, the best market for the greater part of their export has been the Indian Union, Shri T. B. Cunha, an eminent Goan patriot, puts it graphically thus in his book, 'The Goa Problem', "Our economy is strongly linked with India. It is the money earned by Goans living in India that serves to balance the bankrupt eco­nomy of Goa's external trade. We are fed with food coming from our neighbour­hood. It is Indian capital that helps us to exploit our indus­tries. The Portuguese never invested any capital in our land and are only taking money out of it." In the light the foregoing, it is neces­sary that financial measures should be accompanied by an effective trade embargo if our purpose is to be achieved.

Pakistan's Action

In this context, one cannot but condemn Pakistan's unfriendly action in providing facilities for planes and ships carrying goods and personnel to Goa. It was reported in Parliament recently that Pak­istan had agreed to sell rice to Goa; shortly a regular air service between Goa and Pakistan is expected. The latter is a signatory to the Bandung declaration against colonialism. Therefore, her support to a crack­ing colonial power is most reprehensible. And Shurawardy's comparison of Kashmir with Goa recently was truly sinister.

It is at times glibly argued that the Goan movement is Indian inspir­ted and conducted. This charge was answered in a most telling manner by Shri H. C. Denis, Chairman of the Goan League in England. In a letter to the "Manchester Guardian" on August 16. He said that Goan history "accounts for over 40 rebel­lions against Portuguese rule". In 1946, fourteen Goan leaders were deported to Portugal and Angola. "Between February, 1954 and May, 1955, about 3,000 Goans have been arrested and over a thousand Goans imprisoned, some without trial, be­sides some thousands who have been taken to police stations and beaten on mere suspicion such as the pos­session of Mahatma Gandhi's or Mr. Nehru's photos. This is no small evidence of our determination to reunite with India".

No Civil Liberties At All

Apart from daily indications in (Continued on page 1043)