

*Goa — Too Long in Going*

**P**UBLIC opinion in India has been agitated over the manner in which the Portuguese authorities in Goa have treated the venerable freedom fighter of Maharashtra, Senapati Bapat, and his gallant associates in the first batch of satyagrahis to enter that alien-dominated pocket. Those who are a little too much bothered about international niceties to realise the magnitude of the provocation that the Portuguese have been offering may question the propriety of allowing satyagrahis to cross the Indian border into what is to them foreign territory. To distant Delhi, Goa may be no more than a pimple to be scraped off in course of time. But to people living around the pocket, who have their kith and kin and even ancestral homes inside and who have been deeply pained by the happenings there, the problem has assumed an urgency which a merely legalistic approach cannot assuage. This is, however, not to condemn Delhi's high rectitude in this matter, but rather to point out that there is another aspect to it, call it human, emotional or even that of common decency, which can no longer be ignored. If Goa were a sequestered islet far off in the Arabian Sea, it might have been different; but Goa is not only an integral part of India, but one that is in living contact with the rest of the country. What affects it affects other parts too, and in a vital manner. Therefore, to treat it merely as a problem in law or political punctilios is a little unrealistic. Not that Delhi's active intervention is sought; those who seek it tend to take too facile, too short-sighted, a view of things. But for the Government of India to go to the other extreme and prevent the spontaneous forces of freedom from asserting themselves, be it even outside Goa, is to be unduly touchy. After all, the Portuguese are not going to quit Goa gracefully; methods of discussion and negotiation have little appeal to their authoritarian psychology. And grace on our part, though it may no longer be mistaken for weakness, will nevertheless encourage them to persist in their reign of terror, causing untold suffering to the people of Goa. Why should this be allowed to happen, if it can be helped?

The point to remember about Goa is that whatever mistakes the Portuguese authorities might have committed there, they have not been guilty of providing opportunities of

liberal education to the people or allowing them to secure political instruction or training. And if despite this precaution, any sign of political awareness has manifested itself at any time, they have lost no time in suppressing it ruthlessly. They have kept it as a close preserve of Portuguese privilege on the one hand and mass ignorance and servitude on the other—a sort of colonial holiday centre where the few batten on the helplessness and apathy of the majority. Those with spirit or intelligence who could not stand this and who had no great possessions to tie them down, have had to escape from the stuffy atmosphere to seek an honourable livelihood elsewhere in India. In fact, the intellect and heart of Goa reside outside the borders of that little islet of medievalism; and so also a good part of conscious man-power which might have been expected to assert itself against alien insolence and oppression in keeping with the spirit of the times. The result is that there are few left in Goa to present any serious challenge to Portuguese domination; and it is that and the propaganda potentialities of it as also Delhi's unconcern that have enabled the colonial freebooters to put on such airs. Had it been just a pose before removing themselves bag and baggage, none would have been the worse for it. But it seems as though they take themselves very seriously, and still hope to retain their control over Goa, which is certainly not a matter for amusement.

*Blow It Off*

**B**UT what is to be done? To expect a strong movement to develop within Goa is to misread history and misjudge the power of mischief and the capacity for suppression that the Portuguese rulers still possess. It is futile to imagine that the latter have decided to wind up their 400-year-old show and wait for the first ship to transport them home. There might sooner have been a popular rising in Nazi-dominated Germany than in Portuguese-held Goa. It might be well to remember that the machinery of domination and oppression in Goa has been perfected with consummate cunning and cynicism over more than four hundred years of unshaken Portuguese hegemony. Any comparison with pre-Independence India is most inapposite. Nor can there be any reasonable comparison with conditions in the French pockets on the eve of their deliverance. Whether it pleases all of us or not, the

truth, to put it plainly, is that Portuguese authority must be assailed from outside, be it by the most non-violent of methods; and once it is so assailed and there is assurance of strong popular backing from outside, then the crushed spirit of the Goan people may have a chance to revive and give the final kick to the tottering edifice of colonial authority. How is that to come about? Economic measures are not without their value. Indeed, whatever measures have been taken by Delhi to prevent smuggling and restrict remittances to Goa, on which so much of its prosperity depends, have done not a little to stimulate an awakening to realities which Goa had never experienced before. The embarrassing position in which the Portuguese now find themselves is also becoming increasingly evident; but an entrenched power does not yield so easily. Badgered, it becomes even more vicious. So long as it is the people who suffer and not the foreign rulers and again so long as popular discontent does not rise to the point of being able to overthrow its authority, they may not be shaken out of their resolve to cling to the pocket. But if economic measures should be accompanied by convincing tokens of support by people outside Goa, such as Senapati Bapat and his brave band of volunteers have already given, and if these tokens grow in number and intensity, the situation will change—perhaps sooner than most people expect. The (aid-house of Portuguese rule has started wobbling. A strong whiff of popular sentiment should bring it crumbling down—the Government of India permitting.

*Minimum Wages in Agriculture*

**T**HE fixation of minimum wages for agricultural labour has been on the cards for many years. The Minimum Wages Act passed in 1948 provided for it. According to this Act, minimum wages had to be fixed before December 31, 1953, for employments in agriculture. Since some of the States, especially part B States, could not adhere to the time schedule, the Act was amended to extend the last date to December 31, 1954. While efforts have been made to fix minimum rates *in* industrial employments, no progress has been made on an all-India basis, except where wages had been fixed by the respective State Governments,

The obstacles in the way of introducing a minimum wage for agricultural labour are well-known. Cus

tom and convention govern such a large number of transactions in agriculture, and they differ so widely in different parts of the country that it is difficult to evolve a uniform code of minimum wages. Moreover, most of the agricultural employers are themselves small holders and granting that a minimum can be enforced, they might either do away with the little hired labour they employ or, switch over to 'share cropping', which is neither conducive either to efficient cultivation nor desirable on social grounds.

The tripartite labour conference which met last week in Bombay were quite alive to these difficulties, when they discussed the fixation of minimum wages for agricultural labour. Labour leaders were, no doubt, vehement in their demand for the immediate fixation of a minimum wage on a national level and since the Agricultural Labour Enquiry had shown that agricultural labour finds employment on an average for 189 days in a year, they demanded that a fair wage should be fixed during the season of 189 days, which would enable the workers to carry through for the rest of the year. What could be more simple than that?

The representatives of State Governments, however, some of whom have tried fixing a minimum, expressed their doubt about the success of a wage policy for agriculture—owing to the disorganised state of agricultural workers and changing conditions from area to area. Hyderabad's experience of the Minimum Wages Act was one of complete failure. The representative of Rajasthan Government was of the view that the measure should be confined to farms where more than 20 labour-

ers were engaged. The compromise reached was that there should be 3 "pilot" implementation of this measure in selected areas, before it could be extended to all farm labour.

**Price Support Widens Price Differentials**

**T**HE operation of price support in UP in the first two weeks has brought to light some complexities of the problem which could well have been anticipated. This is only the beginning; so there is no need to jump to conclusions, but the facts are sufficiently important and significant to merit attention. Government purchases for the present are confined to fair average quality wheat which normally commands a premium over other qualities. But since Government is buying only this quality and no other, the price difference between different qualities of wheat has widened, and widened so far as to upset the market. While the FAQ (fair average quality) is selling at Rs 10 per maund, the red variety, grown on the banks of Jamuna, has gone down below Rs 6 per maund in the interior. Normally, the price difference between these two qualities does not exceed Rs 1-8; now it is Rs 3-8 or more.

True, there is no *a priori* reason to suspect that the elasticity of substitution among the different qualities would be so low as to enable such high price differentials for long. But experience alone can show how far this assumption is borne out by facts. The situation, it is reported, has been made a great deal worse by lack of adequate publicity with the consequence that villagers, ignorant or sceptical about the price support programme, have resorted to panic selling, thereby further upsetting the market. Of course, relative prices need conform to no set standards. This becomes apparent, when the comparison is extended from different qualities of the same grain, eg, wheat, to other cereals and particularly, to gram, the widening price difference between gram and wheat having been a feature in recent years.

Paradoxically enough, it is because prices had been controlled in the past and the grain market in UP as in other important producing centres had come to depend on a substantial volume of Government purchases, decontrol has left these markets without adequate support. The funds employed in the purchase and earning of stocks and grain were diverted to other uses, trade, capital has not yet returned to the grain market and the tendency to depend

on Government purchases is understandable enough. But this very dependence also retards the flow back of normal trade credits and restoration of arrangements for carrying of stocks,

The more sober opinion in UP as well as elsewhere appears to be that when Government purchases attain substantial proportions, grain markets will regain stability; the implied assumption being, among others, that eventually price support will not be confined to one or two varieties, but will be extended to all the major qualities. It is by no means certain, however, that the same result can be obtained by confining purchases, as at present, to a single quality of wheat. The situation bears more than a passing resemblance to that prevailing in the gilt-edged market when Reserve Bank was, supporting only the Conversion Loan. The price difference of other loans widened perceptibly and this disparity remained pretty wide—judged by the standards of the highly integrated money market where rates are adjusted very finely—and persisted throughout the period of Reserve Bank support.

**THE  
BOMBAY LIFE ASSURANCE  
COMPANY LTD.**

**Record Business in 1954**

**PROPOSED OVER .. Rs. 6,38,00,000**  
**PAID FOR OVER .. Rs. 5,30,00,000**

**Low Premium Rates — High Bonuses.**

**The best and the safest Company  
to Insure with & Represent.**

**Duckback**  
**INDIA'S FAVOURITE RAINWEAR**

**BENGAL WATERPROOF  
WORKS (1940) LTD.**

**CALCUTTA • BOMBAY**