

CORRECTION OF ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

The Deputy Minister of Irrigation and Power (Shri Hathi): Sir, with your permission, I wish to make a correction to reply given by me on the 16th March, 1955 to part (b) of Starred Question No. 1088 by Dr. Ram Subhag Singh. I stated earlier that the concreting work on Bhakra Dam was likely to be started in June, 1955. The correct answer to part (b) should be "During November, 1955".

Shri Kamath (Hoshangabad): May I ask on a point of information, was any attempt made to ascertain who was responsible for the wrong statement?

Shri Hathi: Enquiries were made and it was learnt that the work was to commence in November and not in June.

Shri Kamath: Who was responsible.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. There is no occasion for a discussion on that point.

SITUATION IN GOA

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): I beg leave, Sir, to make a statement in regard to the situation in Goa.

This House and all our countrymen are deeply interested in the problem of the Portuguese enclaves in India. Because of this and the importance of the problem, I have from time to time kept this House informed of developments there and of the policy that Government was pursuing. On the 4th of May last, in a statement in the Lok Sabha, I expressed our concern at some recent developments in Goa which indicated a deepening of the crisis there. During the past two months, there have been further grave developments which have caused anxiety and aroused intense feeling throughout India as well as in Goa.

I should like to remind the House that the struggle of the Goans for freedom and for integration with the Union of India is not a new develop-

ment. It dates back a considerable time. More particularly, in 1946, the prospect of India becoming independent soon naturally brought hope to the Goans, and they made an attempt to free themselves. This attempt failed. Ever since then, there has been a continuing agitation in Goa, and many Goan patriots have suffered because of this. Eminent citizens have been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment or deported. Even an expression of opinion in favour of integration with India or a verbal protest has led to imprisonment, loss of civil rights and sometimes deportation. There is a complete absence of civil rights in Goa, and the normal methods of constitutional agitation are forbidden and suppressed. Nevertheless, the movement for Goan freedom from Portuguese rule has continued. The Portuguese Government has often stated that there is no political movement inside Goa. This is a manifestly wrong statement.

About a year ago, the agitation in Goa became more vigorous and demonstrative. This led to greater repression by the Portuguese authorities. A new turn was given to the movement then by Goans within Goa as well as outside performing some form of satyagraha. This was largely confined to Goans though, occasionally, non-Goans also participated.

Government was anxious that this problem should be settled peacefully and if possible by negotiations with the Portuguese Government. This was the policy Government had adopted both in regard to the French settlements and the Portuguese settlements in India. As the House knows, this policy met with success in regard to the French settlements and an agreement was arrived at with the French Government. In regard to Goa, however, the Portuguese Government have consistently refused to have negotiations or even to discuss this matter. On some occasions, the Government of India's notes addressed to the Portuguese Government have not been accepted by them. Nevertheless, it was the firm policy of Government to pursue peaceful methods only.

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

When satyagraha started within Goa as well as outside, Government had to give careful thought to this new development. In regard to satyagraha inside Goa, the Government of India naturally had no concern. Regarding the entry of satyagrahis into the Portuguese territories, the Government of India's attitude has been to discourage non-Goans from participating in the satyagraha. They also do not look with favour on any mass entry of satyagrahis. In August 1954, a serious situation had arisen but any crisis was avoided because of this policy of Government and the co-operation that people generally gave to it.

Satyagraha, however, has continued ever since then from time to time. On the 18th May, a group of peaceful satyagrahis under the leadership of Shri Goray entered Goa. The Portuguese authorities opened fire on these peaceful men, injuring four of them and later severely beating and man-handling them. Shri Goray and the injured satyagrahis were kept in police custody while the others were pushed out into Indian territory.

Since the 18th May, twelve more groups of peaceful satyagrahis have entered the territory of Goa. These satyagrahis have been treated with considerable brutality. They have been assaulted and beaten till some of them have lost consciousness. It is reported that some of these persons were trampled upon after they had fallen down.

One of the injured satyagrahis, Shri Amir Chand Gupta, was put back into Indian territory in an unconscious state and succumbed to his injuries. Many others were admitted into hospital, suffering from compound fractures and other serious injuries. Another group of satyagrahis led by Shri Jagannath Rao Joshi, on the 25th June, was also fired upon, resulting in injuries to two satyagrahis.

It is reported that another person Shri Maparia, Goan, who was not a

satyagrahi, also met his death because of the severe beating he had received.

Since May last, about eight hundred satyagrahis have entered Goa in different groups and at different times. Of these, nine have been detained and the others have been thrust back into Indian territory often after a beating. Among those detained are Shri N. C. Goray, Shri S. P. Limaye and a Member of this House, Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri.

Some of those in custody have been brought for trial before a local military tribunal. Up till now, so far as our information goes, 122 Goans, most of whom are resident in Goa itself, have been sentenced to terms of rigorous imprisonment ranging from one to twenty-eight years. They have been denied the status of political prisoners and are being treated as common criminals. Thirteen Indians have also been sentenced to terms of imprisonment of eight to nine years.

According to our information, the satyagraha conducted chiefly by Goans as well as some Indians, has been completely peaceful. But some violent acts have been reported as having occurred inside Goa. The Portuguese authorities have stated that these violent activities have been carried out by Indians and by armed personnel from India. This is completely untrue. The satyagrahis have no connection with this and no armed personnel of India has crossed the border. These petty acts of violence are apparently done by some odd individuals within Goa itself as a result of desperation following the repressive policy of the Portuguese Government.

The Portuguese Government have repeatedly stated, firstly, that there is no movement inside Goa and, secondly, that such as there is is not indigenous and is organised and initiated in India. While it is true that in recent months some Indians have participated in the satyagraha, the movement has been essentially a Goan movement. This is borne out by the

fact that in the course of last year about 2,500 Goans have been arrested and subjected to great physical and mental suffering. Even now, about 450 Goans are still in custody.

The Portuguese Government in their propaganda in Goa and abroad, have laid repeated stress on the religious and cultural aspect of the problem. Their claim is that Goa is a part of Portugal, a claim which is manifestly absurd.

According to Portuguese official statistics published in 1951, out of a total population of 6,38,000 in the Portuguese enclaves, all but 1,438 persons are of purely Indian origin. These are hardly distinguishable in language, customs and manners from their brethren across the border. Sixty-one per cent. of the population profess the Hindu faith and about thirty-seven per cent. are Christian Catholics. There are also some Muslims. Only a small percentage of the total population can read and write Portuguese, while the common languages are Marathi, Konkani and Gujrati.

No religious or cultural question arises in Goa. It is well-known that there are many millions of Christians who are nationals of India, most of them being Catholics. It has also been repeatedly stated by Government that the religion, customs and languages of the people of Goa will be respected and protected.

The Government of India had opened a Legation in Lisbon in the hope that this might help in bringing about direct negotiations with the Portuguese Government over the question of Goa. But, on the continued refusal of the Portuguese Government even to discuss this question, the Government of India felt that there was no advantage in keeping the Mission which had ceased to be of practical utility. The Government, therefore, withdrew their representative from Lisbon in July, 1953 and closed their Legation there. Even so, the Government of India hoped that it

might be possible to achieve a negotiated settlement by peaceful means and they took no steps for the closure of the Portuguese Legation in Delhi, which has continued to function here. A proposal was made last year for representatives of the two Governments to meet together without any prior commitments. Even this was rejected by the Portuguese Government. In view of this as well as because of recent developments, the Government of India have come to the conclusion that the continued functioning of the Portuguese Legation in Delhi, in existing circumstances, serves no useful purpose. They have accordingly decided to ask for the closure of this Legation. A note to this effect was personally given this morning by the Foreign Secretary to the Portuguese Charge d'Affaires. The closure of the Legation will take effect from the 8th August, 1955.

As will be evident, the Government of India have exercised the utmost patience and restraint in dealing with the situation in Goa, in spite of the strong and natural feelings of the people of India and Goa. In accordance with their general policy, they will continue to seek a peaceful settlement and will welcome negotiations with the Portuguese Government. No one who knows anything about the past history of Goa and India, the geographical and cultural affinities, and the wishes of the people of Goa and India, can doubt that Goa is an integral part of India and must inevitably become a part of the Indian Union, while preserving its cultural and other interests in accordance with the wishes of the people there. The Government of India hope that, in spite of all that has happened, the Portuguese Government will reconsider their policy and will make a friendly response to their proposal for a negotiated settlement.

The Government of India are firmly convinced that only peaceful methods should be followed and they do not approve of any action which would encourage a resort to violence.

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

There is one other matter, Sir, which I should like to mention. It really is not directly connected with the statement I have made. In this morning's newspapers Members no doubt have seen a news item to the effect that certain railway services to Goa have been suspended. That is a result of an entirely different course of events. What has happened and the position there is that in regard to the railway services the Indian Railways run the services within Goa under a contract with a British Railway which apparently deals with it on behalf of the Portuguese Government. Now, there are two ways of running this railway. There are shuttles—Indian trains—that go to the border and shuttle trains on the other side of the border which serve the other side. In addition to this, there were through-trains going. Now, it was discovered by our railway people, about two months ago or more, that in that small space between the two shuttle services some obstructions had been placed which might be in the nature of mines. The railway engineers reported this; this was on either side of the Sanvordam railway station. This matter was reported to the Portuguese authorities.

Also another odd thing happened. The permanent way staff of the railway who normally attend to the maintenance of the track were asked by the Portuguese military authorities not to attend to these tracks on this place in between. So, this matter was brought to the notice of the Portuguese authorities and they were asked to remove this interference or give an assurance that there was no danger to traffic passing over this section of the railway in Goa. Intimation was also sent to the British Railway which is supposed to be in charge of this. No reply was received within the time stated. This through-railway service has been stopped, because it passes through that little area which was supposed to be dangerous, but the shuttle services on both sides continue. That is, the Indian Railway system

still runs a shuttle on the other side, and of course, on this side. It became incumbent to stop the through-services going over that part of the Goan territory which was supposed to be mined as it was dangerous to passengers and others.

Shri Chattopadhyaya (Vijayavada): With your permission may I make a submission? It is going to be a very curious submission. Inspired by our Prime Minister's speech the other day, I have written a stirring poem on Goa in Hindi.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. I know what his request is.

Shri Chattopadhyaya: I would like to recite it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. We do not read any poems in the House. We treat the business of the House with more seriousness and not through poems.

The House has heard the statement of the hon. Prime Minister, and I think, looking to the importance that the question has assumed in the public eye, perhaps Members of the House may like to have some discussion or debate to make some suggestion to the Government as to what they think are the steps to be taken by the Government. If the hon. Prime Minister is agreeable, we may have some time for that.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: Yes, Sir. We have absolutely no objection to such a discussion taking place. I am entirely in your hands in this matter.

Mr. Speaker: A day may be fixed as early as possible but that will be according to the convenience of the business; but, as the statement is made today, it is better that the discussion should follow this. We will fix up and then it may be notified in the Order Paper.