

Chapter 17.

Matters relating to the State Military and Police Forces.

A. Military Forces.

In the sphere of internal administration the Baroda Government, though theoretically declared to be completely autonomous, laboured under a number of disabilities and restrictions which were not authorised by the treaty engagements but were sought, to be justified on the ground of the "General policy by which the Government of India are guided in such matters."

Strength and Constitution of the Army.

The most important of these restrictions were with regard to matters Military. The Rulers of Baroda were in the past free to determine at their pleasure the strength, constitution and equipment of the Military forces, maintained by them for the preservation of internal order and for cooperating with the British Government in time of War. The predecessors of Sir Sayajirao Gaekwad III exercised these powers freely. When in 1817, the British subsidiary force was increased and the State Contingent was organised in consonance with the terms of the supplement to the Definitive Treaty, the Government of Bombay had suggested to the Regent Fattehsinghrao Gaekwad that he was at liberty to reduce his own army. It may be recalled here that Article 7 of the document of 29th July 1802 whereby Maharaja Anandrao Gaekwad confirmed and ratified the treaty of 4th June 1802 entered into with his Dewan Ravji Appaji contained an undertaking to reduce his Arab and other forces to the standard of Fattehsingh's time; but that was only a part of the agreement whereby the Gaekwad secured the

help of the East India Company in quelling the revolt of Malharrao of Kadi and such an undertaking naturally did not find any place in the Definitive Treaty of mutual defence and alliance contracted in 1805 or in 1817*. However, the suggestion of the Bombay Government to reduce the strength of the Army referred to above was objected too strongly by the Regent who declined any reduction on the ground that the personal interests of many of his leading subjects were at stake. A reference to this "personal interests of many of his leading subjects" will be made later on when we talk of the proposed reorganisation of Irregular Force as suggested by Sir R. Meade in 1875. But here the Bombay Government saw the force of this feeling and when in 1819 the Resident seeing the embarrassment of the State, proposed to reduce the annual expenditure of the Army from Rs. 42,67,000 to Rs. 15,91,500 the Government of Bombay declined to sanction the proposal until they should be assured against the danger of disturbances from the disbanded troops.%

In 1820, the Governor of Bombay Mr. Mount Stuart Elphinstone, by his letter dated 3rd April 1820 % assured the Gaekwad that with regard to his internal affairs he would be entirely unrestrained. But as certain guaranteed debts still existed, the Resident was to be made acquainted with the plans for finance at the commencement of each year. He was to have access to the accounts if required and was to be consulted before any new expenses of magnitude were incurred. On the repayment of the guaranteed debts in 1832 this interference in financial matters, too, ceased altogether.

61

* H.P.O. File No. 341/60 Part-I P. 14
% H.P.O. File No. 341/60 Part I

Since 1832, the Baroda Government had been free to regulate its army as it chose. Increases were made to the Army from time to time, but no intimation was ever given to the British Government. In 1847* when the Bombay Government asked for a statement showing the strength of the Army, the Maharaja politely refused to supply the same and expressed regret that Baroda was treated like other petty states in calling for such a statement. No further demand for information was repeated. It was significant and at the same time clear that the British Government accepted the position that the Baroda State had a right to regulate the strength of its forces and that the British Government need not under the then prevailing relations even ask for a statement for information. (Vide Yadis, Residency Yad No. 723 dated 7th September 1847, Baroda Government's reply dated 17th Jilkad Samvat 1903)*

Towards the end of the reign of Maharaja Sayajirao II, the strength of the State Army was 12,775 men %. A considerable increase was made in the Army by Maharaja Khanderao who reformed the Army and created a disciplined force of Infantry and engaged the services of Europeans and Eurasians to officer it. The Army thus augmented consisted of 17,168 men of all arms, in the last year of his reign. Until 1874 the State Army and police were organised by the Ruling Maharajas according to their own desire, and no exception appeared to have ever been taken to this course.

In 1875, after the deposition of Maharaja Malharrao , a proclamation was issued by the British Government, wherein the following

* H.P.O. File No. 341/60 Part 1.

% H.P.O. File No. 341/61

assurance was conveyed, among other matters:-

"In conferring the Sovereignty of the Baroda State, no alteration will be made in the Treaty Engagements, which exist between British Government and the Gaekwad of Baroda. "**

Yet when in 1881, it was decided by the Government of India to invest Sayajirao III with the powers of administration, the Agent to the Governor General submitted for the approval of that Government the following proposal:-

"The control of the Gaekwad's regular forces has vested in the Agent to the Governor General since the formation of the present administration, and the continuance of this control was affirmed in your letter No. 183 P dated the 19th January (1881). The control exercised by the Agent had been of a general character, the interior management of the force has been carried on by the administration. There appears to be no reason why the force should not be handed over to the Gaekwar's management. The only point of any moment that could arise would be in connection with any increase of the force. It might suffice, if the Agent to the Governor General were authorised to advise His Highness that no increase or material alteration in the constitution of the force should be made without first consulting him."%

To the above proposal the following reply was sent by the Government of India.

"The control of the Military forces of the State should be

* A.T. Vol. VIII 4th Edition - Baroda and Punjab Pp. 97-98.
% H.P.O. File No. 341/61 P. 15.

made over to the Gaekwad on his accession, on the understanding that no material change will be made in the numbers or constitution of his Army without the assent of the British Government."*

Baroda Government took a strong objection to this change stating that "this was clearly a violation of the undertaking of 1875 referred to above. Considering that this restriction did not exist in the Treaties, that the former Rulers of the State exercised unrestricted powers as guaranteed by Mr. Elphinstone's letter of 1820 in regulating the strength, equipment etc. of their Armies, that no alteration was made in the treaty relations in 1875, it was submitted, "it seems prima facie that the restriction imposed in 1881 was meant to be operative for a short time only, until the new Maharaja had sufficient experience in administration. If this were not so, the Government of India have imposed a disability on the State, which did not exist before, ~~the~~ and as the Government were ~~at~~ Trustee during the period of administration from 1875 to 1881, their obligation was to restore to the Ruler all the powers and ~~privileges~~ privileges which the former Maharajas enjoyed."*

Residency letter No. 5391 dated 16-6-1887.

In 1887, after the abolition of the Baroda Contingent and the absorption of some of the men into the Regular Army of the State, the Government of India communicated that "The mounted force of the State will thus consist of 1,500 Regulars and 2000 Irregulars, being a total of 3,500" * This limit was also an innovation which did not exist before.

The restriction regarding material change in the Constitution of

the Army was being interpreted loosely and in harassing manner, as seen from the correspondence carried on between the two Governments, by the British Government. The interpretation was so strict that at times changes in the cut of the dress etc. of the irregular troops were objected to, the conversion of the irregular force into the Police force was also not permitted and even elementary instruction in the drill was not allowed to be imparted to them. Even such a small change as the substitution of horse in place of Bullock traction for the State Artillery was not allowed by the Government of India. The results were not only that the troops were lacking in adequate equipment and in efficiency but they lacked the very elements of awe-inspiring quality of the police, and they came to think of themselves as belonging to the neglected arm of the State service, and hence lost all esprit-de-corps. They even looked upon the State itself as lacking in prestige and authority, and their spirits dropped.*

B. Police Force.

Freedom of the Gaekwad of regulation.

Also His Highness' Government were in the past, at liberty to regulate the strength of the Police forces of the State according to the exigencies of the Administration without any reference to the British Government. The Government of India however, had laid down that their previous consent should be obtained before increasing the strength of the Armed Police. This disability, again did not exist in the terms of the treaties, and the Baroda Government was getting apprehensive of the true intentions of the British Government as on one

* H.P.O. File No. 341 /4

side they promised their adherence to the treaties and on the other the treaties were interpreted altogether in a different manner by them. It said, if such solemn engagements are allowed to be modified and rendered more rigid by one sided arrangements, conveyed only through the Resident's letter, one can easily understand how in course of ~~the~~ time all the sanctity of old treaties is in danger of being dried up under the pressure of newly created one sided usage." *

Moreover the Baroda Government submitted that the condition mentioned in letter No. 477 I.P. , dated 1st June 1881, from the Secretary to the Government of India to the Agent to the Governor General was with reference only to the "Military Forces" of the State. The words were "The control of the Military Forces of the State should be made over to the Gaekwad on his accession on the understanding that no material change will be made in the numbers or constitution of his Army, without the assent of the British Government."% There was no condition or restriction as regards the police force.

However, in 1901, when His Highness' Government proposed to absorb some part of their irregular force into the police force, the Government of India took exception. They wrote:- "They are constrained to point out that the change (for which no reason is assigned by the Darbar) involves a large addition to the forces of the State and that the conversion of the unarmed irregulars into armed or drilled police is in fact a breach of the accepted principle that no alteration may be made in the constitution of the Irregular force without

*H.P.O. File No. 341/4

% Bound Volume, 'Military Matters' P.16.

the previous sanction of the Government of India. x x x
The Government of India would have no objection to the permanent conversion of a portion of them (Irregular force) into Police but it must be understood that this would necessitate a corresponding diminution in the number of the purely stipendiary police at present employed. Any proposals for gradual and reasonable additions to the Police force would have to be justified on the ground of the legitimate needs of the growing administration." (Residency letter No. 19191 dated 15th December 1904).*

Baroda Government Baffled.

Baroda Government was baffled at this view of the Government of India and it was not able to understand how the former claimed that they had the right to control the Police force of the Baroda State. By the previous Treaties and Engagements with the State, they did not acquire it, nor was it a condition imposed in 1881 when Sir Sayaji Rao III was invested with the full powers of administration. That condition as quoted above had reference to the Military force or Army alone; there was no reference therein to the police force at all.

When this was pointed out by the State on 23rd March 1906, the Government of India replied:- "His Highness cannot be permitted to ~~xxx~~ increase his armed Police force without first obtaining the permission of the Government of India, for this reason that the men of the armed Police are trained and disciplined and bear arms just as the regular forces of the State. To increase the armed Police force would be to increase the armed forces of the State, and this

cannot be permitted without the express sanction of the Imperial Government." (Residency letter No. 12854 dated 24-8-1906)*

The Baroda Darbar considered it hardly good reasoning they further stated that "it is not correct to argue that as the Police force is trained and disciplined and bears arms it is an armed force, and, therefore, it is an Army. It is at best, " they concluded "only a laboured straining of the condition imposed with regard to the Military forces and Army of the State. *

Proposed supply of revolvers to the
State Police officers.

There was still another question under this head. Though the Baroda police had to do exactly the same duties, the officers of that force were not allowed to be supplied with revolvers, such as were given to the officers of the British Police.

It was in 1902% that Sir Sayajirao ordered that revolvers should be supplied to all officers of the Police. The Baroda Government thereupon, wrote to the Residency to ascertain what class of weapons was supplied and to what ranks of Police officers in British India. The Resident replied to say that as revolvers were rifled arm~~x~~/s, the Government of India would not sanction their supply to the Police officers of the State. In reply Baroda Government urged that the duties of the Baroda Police officers and their counterparts in the British India were the same and, therefore, no objection should be raised. On His Highness's representation the Government of India observed that they could not agree to the issue

*Bound Volume, 'Military Matters' P.17

%From a note on the subject dated 15-9-12 P.21.

of these weapons unless His Highness' Government could prove the existence of very special circumstances, and that, even then, it would probably ~~enl~~ be only on loan.

Baroda Government thereupon forwarded a statement giving some of the occasions on which the efficiency of their police officers had suffered for want of revolvers, but the Residency declined to comply with their request.*

His Highness however, on the whole subject felt that Equity and Justice required that the Treaties should be restored to their former character of obligation on both sides and it ~~was~~ was further argued that with the liberalising of the Government of India, such restrictions not consistent with the treaty engagements, placed on the freedom of the Indian States internal matters, should be removed, and greater trust and confidence shown towards them.

C.Arms and Ammunition.

Position in Ancient Times.

In former times there existed a State Factory in Baroda for the manufacture of gun-powder. Since 1823 A.D. the necessary supply of cannon and musketry powder used, however, to be obtained from the British Government, the traders of the City and Mahals used to manufacture and sell gun-powder to the public. In 1858, such private factories were ordered by the Baroda Government to be closed, and the manufacture of Arms for the use of any person and the sale of gunpowder and lead without permission was prohibited. In September 1858, the Resident inquired how many factories there were in Baroda

*From a note on the subject, dated 15-9-12 P. 12.

territory for manufacturing gun-powder, whether there was any objection to close the same, how much quantity of gun-powder was consumed by the Sarkar and the public, and whether the State was willing to procure the necessary quantity from the Government factory. The Baroda Government replied that they intended to manufacture gun powder in the State factory and requested the Resident to obtain from the British Government the new materials, such as salt petre and sulphur, and these materials were actually supplied. Meanwhile, the Resident intimated that the Government of Bombay were inclined to supply the gun powder from their factory and the State accepted the offer. (Yad No. 1478 dated 12-12-1859)*. Since then ammunitions, arms, clothing and accountrements required for the use of the State troops were obtained from the British Arsenals at Bombay and Ahmedabad on payment. Sometimes, these articles were procured through the Darbar Agents in Bombay from England direct.

By agreeing to obtain from the British Arsenals arms, ammunition, Military Stores etc. His Highness' Government was of the view that it did not forego its right to manufacture the same in Baroda for the use of the troops or to order the same direct from England, when necessary. In 1870, the Government of Bombay had offered for sale to the State, an Engine and a machine for manufacturing percussion caps, which had been caused to be prepared by them for the use of the King of Abyssinia, but it was not purchased by the State.

Raja ~~Sir~~ Sir T. Madhav Rao's proposal.

In 1878, Raja Sir T. Madhav Rao made the following proposal:-

"We require arms and ammunition for our military and police. These may have to be imported sometimes from England, unless the British Government would supply the same at cost price and free of duty. The Agent to the Governor General on the spot can easily satisfy himself of the necessary requirements of the administration in this respect. To the extent of these requirements, I beg that no duty be charged."* This was after the Indian Arms Act of 1878, and , therefore there was the pointed reference to exemption from duty on imports.

Government of India's views on it.

With reference to the above proposal the Government of India wrote to the Agent to the Governor General as follows:-

"The Governor-General is pleased to direct that such arms and ammunition and Military stores as the Baroda State may, from time to time, require, will be supplied by the British Government free of duty, on the condition that the State does not procure such articles from any other quarter or manufacture them itself. It will be for you to decide whether indents for arms, ammunition or military stores submitted by the Baroda Government , are within the legitimate requirements of the State."*

It may be noted here that in proposing the arrangement for procuring arms and ammunition for the State Military forces from the British Arsenal, the Baroda Government wanted to retain to themselves the option of manufacturing arms locally or importing them from England independently . The main object of the arrangement was simply

to secure exemption from the prohibitive duties leviable under the Indian Arms Act on imported arms, and no other." The condition about non-manufacture in the State was, however arbitrarily imposed by the Government of India, criticised the Baroda Government and on the Minister agreeing thereto on certain specified terms, it was intimated, under instructions of Government of India, that it was unnecessary to discuss the condition. Baroda regarded this attitude as "clear disregard of a specific undertaking."

Furthermore, the arrangement would appear to have been intended primarily for fire arms, but, in course of time, it was extended to cover within its purview swords, spears, etc. for when in 1887, Major Mellis whose services were temporarily engaged by the State for the purpose of reorganising the State Troops, ordered out direct from England 900 Cavalry Swords, the procedure was objected to by the Residency ~~and~~ authorities who averred that the arrangement applied to the procuring of all arms and ammunition required for the use of the regular troops of the State.

The Baroda representations commenting on this disability stated thus:- "It need hardly be added that this disability was not contemplated in the arrangement of 1879. Arms ordered out direct were only liable to the duty, but the right to import was not surrendered by the arrangement. Except with the free consent of the Baroda Government, the surrender of such an important right could not be implied or presumed. Moreover, as the arrangement was arrived at during the minority of His Highness the present Maharaja, the administration under the supervision of the Resident, in their fiduciary character, were expected to conserve and safeguard the valued privileges of the Ruler .

The case, therefore, deserves sympathetic consideration, and it is submitted that the liberty of action which the Government of His Highness the Maharaja possessed in this regard before 1878 will be restored to them."*

On another like representation% on the same subject the Baroda Darbar bitterly remarked about the refusal of British Government for the supply of rifled arms. They said as these weapons were not supplied to their troops, they were left in an inefficient condition. Moreover if the state troops were properly disciplined and equipped they would have been of the considerable help to Government in their time of emergency like World War I. Even in the case of supply of such old weapons as the bored out Martini Heavy Rifles and carbines, a condition had been imposed that an equal number of old weapons in the armoury of the State should be handed over to the British Government . Revolvers were not supplied even for the use of Commissioned officers of the troops.

The effects of this ill-equipment and the fallen exspirit-decarps were, that the soldiers did not rise to the occasion when confronted with the necessity of fighting as was shown during a petty local insurrection in the State. There could be no doubt , in the light of history, about the valour of these men, the simple fact was that they had been deprived of all military ardour by the treatment meted out to them.

However, after due deliberation, the Baroda Government consented in 1911 to purchase the rifles and to return an equivalent number of old arms, provided their cost was paid to the Baroda Sarkar

This was agreed to by the British Government and the rifles and carbines were supplied in instalments to the State troops.*

D. Arms Act.

We have referred to this Act on the foregoing lines and to the irksome duties which it levied on arms and the hardship of the Baroda Government. But its implications were still greater hardship and inconvenience not only to the State but also to its subjects in its actual working.

Limited Exemption of the Gaekwad family from the Act.

The Maharaja and the members of his family and a few leading nobles had been exempted from certain sections of the Act, but at every time they to order out arms and ammunition, a certificate of no objection had to be obtained from the Resident.* Their arms and ammunition too, could not be sent from one place to another in charge of their private servants unless a certificate of identity was secured. Owing to the fact that the Baroda State was broken up into four divisions with intervening British territory and with innumerable isolated patches, besides the difficulty of peaceful travel from one part of the State to another, became exceedingly irksome. In the case of the nobles the number exempted was very small, and no addition was made to the number on any account. The remaining Sardars and the subjects of the State had to obtain licenses, in some cases on payment of fees whenever they had to go armed on a journey or to purchase arms or ammunitions for their use. The Baroda Government in this connection thought it desirable that "if in future, it is found necessary to continue the prohibitions

*H.P.O. Bound Volume Representation Dated 15-9-12.

in the Arms Act in British India, the necessity for obtaining certificates in the case of the exempted persons in the State, should be done away with, the numbers of exemptions suitably increased, and the District Magistrates of the State should be authorised to issue licenses to such Sardars and subjects as are not exempted from the Act. In conclusion it is our painful duty to record that the old time Maratha ardour of the people had been crushed to the ground by the treatment they had received. The results are too unhappily obvious at the present juncture, when the recruiting of troops for the service of His Majesty is a prime necessity, and yet the men cannot be induced to come forward . It must be confessed that the policy of repression is now reacting on the Government itself."*

E. Baroda Irregular Forces.

While per~~using~~ the correspondence on the Military matters of the Baroda Archives one will often come across the term Baroda Irregular Force. It appears that except the subsidiary Force, all the State Army consisted of Irregular troops. In the initial stages even the Baroda contingent was also included in this Irregular Force. Before 1875 it had grown up without any definite plan and had become unwieldy , thus constituting a grave danger for the State as powerful Military Sirdars often wielded the sceptre whenever their demands were not met. It was a result of an absence of ^{any} ~~any~~ definite and sound policy and the weakness of some of the Maharajas, who had to seek the support of the Military for the preservation of their Gadi. Before Sir Richard Meade took over the administration of the State in 1875 as Agent to the Governor General and Special Commissioner, Baroda, no accurate and trust worthy account of these large and

costly establishments was in existence. It was he, who first of all collected full details about this force in the hope that with full details on this head before him, the Minister, in consultation with the Agent to the Governor General may by and by be able to devise some practical measures for the gradual reduction of some at least of the levies, or their absorption in the new Police arrangements, which were then under organisation, without hardship or injustice to the parties most interested and as far as possible, with their concurrence.

Sir R.Meade's Views on the origin and nature of this force.

Regarding the origin and nature of this force Sir R.Meade remarked that one of the most perplexing feature of the system under which these establishments had hitherto been maintained, was the practice, to which there was apparently no limit, of the assignments of new establishments, at the caprice of the Chief, to any favourite of the moment the general charge under his head, being thus liable to large enhancement, without any State necessity and merely with the object of gratifying or adding to the means and influence of favoured individuals. *

Sir Richard was also able to mark on the other hand that the Chiefs had exercised the power of reducing or suppressing altogether at will and often in the most arbitrary manner, the grants so conveyed, and there could be no doubt that very great hardship was thus, at times inflicted on the large numbers of men, who were suddenly deprived of the subsistence which had descended to them in many instances as ~~as~~ hereditary right.

He records his opinion* of his free exercise of the power of reduction and resumption of such grants, however, capriciously or unjustly practised that it had served to some extent as a counterpoise to their unreasonable and lavish bestowal and had practically limited the drain on the finances of the State, that the system must otherwise have rendered most embarrassing, if not absolutely ruinous.

The principal Sirdars had, as a rule, been exempted from the operation of such reductions and resumptions, as those referred to, though they were instances of their class having been subject thereto equally with others, and they afterwards claimed absolute immunity, particularly in the time of Sir Madhav Rao's administration, ~~of which~~
~~over two instances were dealt with in the Chapter of *Important~~
~~Political Cases of this class.~~ These Sardars claimed this immunity as of right. against the exercise of such power by the Ruler, at all in their case, on the ground that the State was originally conquered by the Gaekwad with the ~~aid~~ aid of their predecessors and the levies maintained by them, and that they are, therefore, entitled to hold in perpetuity the grants then or since assigned for their support.

However, the claim thus put forth did not appear to have been recognised by the successive Rulers of the State, and in the opinion* of Sir Richard Meade the claim could only be properly admitted to the extent of the personal allowances and emoluments enjoyed by the Sirdars and the equivalent of the net profit derived by them from the establishments they were authorised to maintain.

Need of Reorganisation.

There was therefore, an urgent need of some kind of reorganisation

of this huge force, but the Agent to the Governor General at that stage, thought it to be "impolitic" an attempt of any reduction of their establishments.* particularly in the case of then existing Sardars, or their lineal successors, unless with their own consent, and such reduction in his opinion could only be made on occasion of succession by adoption, with due precautions against the infliction of hardship, consequent thereon. He laid down, therefore, the following course which he thought should be strictly adhered to.

"On its part, the State should scrupulously provide by service, gratuity or pension for all members of these establishments discharged under such arrangements as well as grant equitable compensation for all horses, the private property of the Pagedars or Sillidars that may cease to be employed in consequence."*

Elsewhere in his note the Agent to the Governor General suggested that: "But the Sirdars, equally with all other holders of such establishment should be required to provide for the performance of such duties as the State may fairly demand at their hands and to maintain their levies in such condition as may be necessary for the proper and efficient discharge of the same. *

Hereditary officer's opposition for reorganisation.

These Pagadars and Sillidars , were, however, generally opposed to any change in the arrangements connected with themselves or their establishments and clung to the then existing State of things as essential to the preservation of their rights.

* Residency File 478.

They complained of their pecuniary difficulties and indebtedness but when they were asked if they would meet the wishes and efforts of the State to relieve them therefrom, by resigning a portion of their establishments they at once declared such a course to be impossible and ^{added} that their position and their honour would suffer if the latter were to be reduced by a single man.

The whole of these classes were in the hands of the bankers, who were styled "Purukhs", with whom for very many years past they and their predecessors had carried on a running account, which was made up at intervals.

These "Purukhs" drew the pay of their clients from the treasury on permanent orders to that effect and gave them from time to time such money as they required for their ordinary expenses.

Under this system, then, these classes were not free agents but were really "bondsmen to the Purukhs" as Sir R. Meades called them.* ~~and that~~ The result was that the condition of the whole of the Irregular Force of the State was unsound and most unsatisfactory.

On their parts the "Purukhs" regarded the Government as bound to support the system and as responsible for its maintenance unless it is itself prepared to discharge the accumulated debts of the classes in question.

The amount of public money, therefore, as expended on these establishments was very large and many abuses existed even in connection with its out^{lay} ~~lay~~ and the advantages derived by the State from

*Residency File 478.

their maintenance bore no proportion to their great cost.

To organise such an Irregular force was a very tough job but the untiring perseverance of Raja Sir T. Madhav Rao and the successive Dewans achieved it in due course of time successfully and the administration of the reformed force came under the control of the Departmental Agency.