CHAPTER IX

NAM AND DECOLONIZATION IN THE ATLANTIC AND INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS

(A) ATLANTIC OCEAN ISLANDS

(1) ST. HELENA


The territory is still a British colony and is on the list of the United Nations for further consideration. But as political parties have been inactive in the territory since 1976, there is no demand for independence.

(2) FALKLAND ISLANDS (MALVINAS)

Malvinas consists of two main islands - East Falkland and West Falkland. There are about 200 islands which are administered as parts of the colony. Its total area is 4,618 sq. miles and its population, which is entirely of British descent, was 2,230 in 1953.

The Argentinians call it "Islas Malvinas". During the colonial period, both Spain and Britain established colonies in this territory. Argentina became independent on July 9, 1816. It claimed the inheritance of the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands and tried to establish a colony on them after 1820. In 1831, the Islands Argentinian inhabitants were dispersed by the United States as Argentina had detained a US

2. Ibid.
The United Kingdom sent a warship which occupied the Falkland Islands holding that "according to international law, the actual use and occupation of a territory prevails over theoretical claims". Thus, British sovereignty was established over the country. Chile also claimed the territory between 53°W and 90°W. However, there was a truce between the three which has been renewed from time to time, according to which they agreed not to move warships south of 60° latitude.

In March, 1962, Britain established a separate colony of British Antarctic Territory, "comprising part of the former territory of the Falkland Islands dependencies". The dependencies were the Islands of South Georgia and South Sandwich, which have been a separate territory since 1908. In 1966, the people, nearly all British by descent, expressed their desire to remain under British sovereignty. Argentina claims that the Islands were once part of Spanish colony, which had come under the dominion of Argentina in 1810, but were later occupied by the United Kingdom in 1833. The British Government asserts that she has sovereignty over it. In June, 1971, Britain and Argentina agreed "to exchange views on these matters".

The Colombo NAM Summit Conference (1976) strongly supported the claim of Argentine Republic and urged the United Kingdom "to actively pursue the negotiations recommended by the United Nations for the purpose of restoring that territory to Argentine sovereignty".

In 1982, there was a clash between the Argentine and British forces. Britain granted full British citizenship to the islanders in

---

4. Ibid., p. 858.
the same year. On October 29, 1986, the United Kingdom claimed the territorial waters around the disputed islands to "150 nautical miles\(^1\) with the creation of the Falkland Islands Interim Conservation and Management Zone (FICZ). In March, 1987, the British military manoeuvres involved "transportation of British troops to the islands". On November 17, 1987, the UN General Assembly called for negotiations for a peaceful solution to the Falkland dispute.

The British military manoeuvres (called Operation Fire Focus) were described as a "downright offensive\(^1\) by Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and other Latin American countries. At the UN Security Council meeting held on March 17, 1988, the Argentine Foreign Minister described the manoeuvres as a serious threat both to international peace and to Argentine security. The Security Council observed that the British aimed at consolidating its colonial domination of the islands and that Argentina was talking about a "handover date" helplessly.

On July 13, 1988, the United Kingdom appointed William Fullerton as Governor of the Islands and asserted its claim over the territory.

(B) INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDS

(1) COMORO ISLANDS

The Comoro Archipelago is situated at the entrance to the Mozambique Channel and between Madagascar and the Tanzanian coast. Hence, it occupies a strategic position. The principal islands of this group are Njazida (formerly Grand-Comoro), Nzwani (formerly Anjouan), Mwali (formerly Moheli) and Mahore (formerly Myotte). The French

10. "278 km. offshore, as well as a garrison of about 4,000 troops", see The Europa Year Book, n. 1, Vol.II, p. 2860.
12. Ibid., October, 1988, p. 36207.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 35809; see also The Europa Year Book, n.1, Vol. II, p. 2861.
occupied Mayotte in 1843, and the other islands between 1866 and 1909. In 1912, they were joined with Madagascar.

For the purpose of retaining their military bases in the region, the French separated the Comoros from Madagascar after the Second World War. Influenced by the declarations of the NAM leaders during the 1950s, the people of the territory demanded self-government. As a result, the French granted some internal autonomy to it in 1961. A political party, the Movement for the National Liberation of the Comoros (MOLINACO), founded in 1962, was sought to be suppressed by the French, and was forced to go underground. It was revived under the name of the Evolution Party. Along with other nationalist parties—the People’s Democratic Grouping, the Democratic Union, the Socialist Party, the Evolution Party demanded complete independence. To counter this demand, the French encouraged the formation of a French organisation called the Party of Unity and Independence for the Comoros.

The Algiers NAM Summit Conference (1973) considered it "urgent to put an end to the colonial presence" in Comoros. It declared that in spite of the tactics of the French and the English, the people of Comoro Islands were marching towards freedom, exposing the strategy of colonial powers in the Indian Ocean.

Inspired by the NAM, the Evolution Party and the Socialist Party came together to form the United National Front. A plebiscite, held in 1974, demonstrated that "the overwhelming majority of the islanders wanted the complete independence of the Comoros". A meeting of the NAM Coordinating Bureau held at Algiers in 1975 called for the acceleration of the process of the total decolonization of the Comoros Islands. The French conducted a referendum again in three islands (excluding Mayotte) in which the people again voted in favour of complete

18. Ibid.
19. Two Decades of Non-Alignment, n. 9, p. 95.
22. Two Decades of Non-Alignment, n. 9, p. 132.
independence. The French then adopted a neo-colonialist policy. With their encouragement, Ahmed Abdallah, who was a tool in their hands and had been installed as the President of the Comoro Government Council in 1972 with the support of the pro-French Party for the Unity and Independence of the Comoros (PUIC) Abdallah unilaterally proclaimed the independence of Grand-Comoro, Anjouan and Moheli and established his government on July 6, 1975.

The Lima NAM Ministerial Conference (1975) welcomed the independence of Comoros ignorant of the fact that this was part of the French plan to continue its control over the territory indirectly, and that Abdallah was "neither the forger nor the true defender" of independence. He had declared: "I am telling the foreigners that they can still feel at home here" (i.e. in Comoros). The French transferred all their troops and military equipment to Mayotte and, thus, the Comoro Islands were dismembered. Very soon Abdallah was overthrown.

In 1975, the French Prime Minister claimed that Comoros Islands had opted for independence, and friendship and cooperation with France and that France had "probably done more than any other country for the emancipation of peoples and to respect their dignity". The statement was, in fact, to somehow defend its colonialist policy in the face of opposition to colonialism and neo-colonialism by the NAM countries.

However, the people of the Comoro Islands are still struggling for their freedom.

(2) MADAGASCAR (MALAGSY)

Madagascar has in its adjoining area many small islands, including Mossi-Be, Santa Maria, Bassas da India, Europa and Juan de Nova. A Portuguese explorer, Diego Diaz, reached Madagascar on August 10, 1500, and named it St. Lawrence Island. Later the Dutch and the French competed for establishing their colony on the island. In 1885, France

23. Ibid., p. 144.
25. Ibid.
occupied it by force and declared it a French protectorate. In 1896, a rebellion started on the island resulted in the killing of 700,000 people within a span of twenty years. Liberation forces, which emerged again in 1916 and 1929 were also crushed in a cruel manner.

The various conferences and meetings held by the leaders of newly independent countries and founders of the NAM, gave new zeal to the people of Madagascar and France was forced to grant semi-autonomy to the island in 1957, the status of autonomous republic within the French community in 1958, and finally independence on June 26-27, 1960.

The government formed after the liberation of Madagascar, was headed by Philbert Tsiranana, the leader of the Socialist Democratic Party, who followed a pro-French policy and oppressed the people. Thus, the Republic became a vassal state of French neo-colonialism. Tsiranana's relations with South Africa, Rhodesia, Portugal, Israel and the United States caused a revolt and the regime was overthrown in 1971 by Gabriel Ramanantsoa, who established relations with socialist countries like Soviet Union, Vietnam, Cambodia, Cuba and the PLO and with the independent nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The French troops left the Ivato air base.

In 1974, insurgents of the Mobile Police Group (GMP) attempted to overthrow Ramanantsoa. In this difficult situation, he transferred his powers to Col. R. Ratsimandrava, who nationalised more than 250 large private estates in 1975. In February, 1975, a member of the GMP assassinated Ratsimandrava with the support of the former President, Tsiranana, and some military officers.

The Havana NAM meeting (1975) welcomed "the proposition of Madagascar for holding a conference of coastal states and land-locked countries in the region, appealing to all countries not to grant facilities to warships of foreign powers". After a number of quick changes, Ratsiraka was elected President of the Island in December, 1975, and a Charter of the Malagasy Socialist Revolution was adopted. On December 30, 1975, the country was renamed the Malagasy Democratic Republic.

27. Ivo Dvorak, n. 1, p. 437.
28. Ibid.
29. Two Decades of Non-Alignment, n. 9, p. 136.
In 1976, President Ratsiraka declared that all the vital sectors of the national economy must be nationalized. The colonialists attempted to overthrow him in 1978 and 1981, to end the country's socialist transformation and to restore capitalist order so as to continue their hold on the strategic islands.

The Havana NAM Summit Conference (1979) called for the reintegration of the Glorieuses, Juan de Nova, Europa and Bassa de India islands which had been "arbitrarily separated in 1960 by decrees of the former metropolis". The NAM conferences and meetings held in 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986 reaffirmed the paramount need to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of the Republic and strongly urged "all the parties concerned immediately to open negotiations pursuant to the relevant resolutions and decisions of the United Nations, the Movement of the Nonaligned Countries and the Organization of African Unity".

(3) MAURITIUS

In 1947, a colonial Legislative Council was established in Mauritius. The Labour Party led by S. Ramgoulam, associated with the Indo-Mauritian majority stood in the forefront of independence struggle in the 1960s. Encouraged by the NAM Summit Conferences held at Belgrade (1961) and Cairo (1964), there were frequent upheavals, which made Arthur Greenwood, the British Secretary for Colonial Affairs, to announce in September, 1965, that Mauritius would become independent by the end of 1966. Prime Minister Ramgoulam, the head of the autonomous government demanded complete independence, but the owners of the large sugarcane plantations tried to resist the struggle for independence and sought some sort of British association with Britain. However, Mauritius became independent on March 12, 1968, after 253 years of colonial rule.

31. Two Decades of Non-Alignment, n. 9, p. 413.
A few hours before declaration of independence, Ramgoulam signed a treaty of mutual defence and assistance with Britain. The treaty gave the right to the British to use their installations in Mauritius.

Sir Ramgoulam participated in the Algiers NAM Summit Conference (1973). The Mauritius Militant Movement, in cooperation with the Nonaligned countries, won 34 of the 70 seats of the parliamentary elections in 1976, but the Labour Party leader, Ramgoulam retained his post of Prime Minister because of his alliance with other parties. Mauritius government maintains very close ties with Pretoria. In 1980, Pretoria gave 145 million dollars to the government for purchase of Mauritius tea, which is of low quality, and to set up an "Operation Refinery" in association with a French firm.

Diego Garcia

Diego Garcia is 22 sq. km. and the main island of the Chagos archipelago, which was occupied and attached to Mauritius by the British in the nineteenth century. It is the only inhabited island with a small population of Mauritian origin. When the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) was formed, the island was separated from Mauritius. Between 1960 and 1962, the United States gave 14 million dollars to Britain for establishing air and naval bases in the area. The British Secretary of State, Arthur Greenwood, announced on November 10, 1965, the exclusion of the Chagos archipelago from Mauritian territory "in agreement with the governments of the Island of Mauritius and the Seychelles", which were both still colonies. On March 29, 1977, the Mauritian Foreign Minister admitted: "The base on Diego Garcia; Our independence was worth this price".

However, the NAM has launched a large scale campaign for return of the island of Diego Garcia to Mauritius. The Algiers NAM meeting (1974) held that "the Anglo-American base on the Island of Diego Garcia" was "in disregard of the express recommendations by the coastal and landlocked States of the Indian Ocean that this Ocean should be transformed into a zone of peace" and that "Great Power rivalries in..."
the area, be gravely prejudicial to the cause of peace and to the vital interests of the developing nations in the area. The meeting, condemning the expansion of US installations on the island, laid emphasis on the need of the implementation of the UN resolution for establishing a peace zone in the Indian Ocean and invited "all countries concerned to take concrete steps to expedite its implementation". The meeting regretted that the NATO powers were violating resolutions of the General Assembly and the resolutions of the Security Council in this connection. The Lima NAM Conference (1975) observed that the air, naval and military presence of the Great Powers in Diego Garcia were being strengthened, which created rivalries and tensions endangering the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the States in that area. It urged all states for a "joint action to guarantee the full observance of the principles of nonalignment" and expressed its conviction that "continuous efforts are necessary to dissolve the military alliances conceived within the context of Great Power rivalry". The meeting called upon "all littoral and hinterland States belonging to multilateral military alliances conceived in the context of Great Power rivalry to withdraw from them as soon as possible". The Colombo NAM Conference (1976) urged upon the Great Powers to dismantle their military installations on Diego Garcia, saying that such a development "would lead to tension and conflict in the Indian Ocean through Great Power competition for naval superiority in the area". The Conference "condemned the existence of South African military bases in the area and the close military cooperation between the Pretoria regime, Israel and certain Western Powers in the region" and the "existence of the Simonstown and Silvermine bases as well as Project Advokaat whose objectives included surveillance over African national liberation movements". The New Delhi Conference (1977), Belgrade Conference (1978)

37. Ibid., p. 124.
38. Ibid., p. 136.
39. Ibid., p. 124.
40. Ibid., p. 150.
41. Ibid., p. 162.
42. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
The island of Mayotte is a part of Comoros archipelago. It lies between Madagascar and the east coast of the African mainland.

In 1843, the king of Comoros ceded all the Mayotte islands of the Comoros archipelago to France, which occupied Grand-Comoro, Aljouan and Moheli also and in 1912, joined the four islands to Madagascar. They were occupied by the British troops during 1940-44. After the Second World War, Comoros was separated from Madagascar. In 1961, Comoros was granted autonomous status within the French Union and after seven years internal self-government was conferred upon it by France.

The National Liberation of the Comoros (MLNAC) which was founded in 1962, organised the Evolution Party. The People's Democratic Grouping, the Democratic Union, the Socialist Party and the Evolution Party demanded complete independence, while the stand of the Party for the Unity and Independence of the Comoros (PUIC) was pro-government.

In a plebiscite held on December 22, 1974, 95.50% of the Muslim population of Comoros, Aljouan and Moheli voted for independence, while 65% of the Catholic inhabitants voted in favour of ties with France. The colonial government claimed the right to maintain its military presence in the Indian Ocean. However, the Comoran Chamber of Deputies unilaterally proclaimed the independence of the four islands (Grand-Comoro, Aljouan, Moheli and Mayotte) on July 6, 1975.

Comoros claims the island of Mayotte as its "national territory", while the people of Mayotte, in a referendum held in February and April, 1976, "preferred to retain links with France". Comoros represents Mayotte at international organizations and even in the United Nations.

The Colombo NAM Summit Conference (1976) recognised Mayotte as

45. Revie* of International Affairs, n. 32, n. 50.
47. Ibid.
an integral part of Comoros and demanded withdrawal of French troops from the island. France began to block the import of basic products into Comoros. In March, 1977, President Soilih of Comoros demanded the withdrawal of the French troops from Mahore, from where the colonialists were carrying on their provocative activities.

Since Mayotte had rejected the Comoros proposal to join it under a federal system and had, instead reaffirmed its links with France, in May, 1978, the French sent Calendestine Liberation Force dressed in plain clothes and fifty mercenaries led by Robert Denard of France and financed by France and the United States Intelligence agencies. Denard, under the guise of the Muslim name, Said Mustafa Mahjib, assassinated President Soilih.

The NAM continued to support the just aspirations of the people of the Comoros, who demanded respect for their territorial integrity and sovereignty, which was being violated by the French by their continued control of Mahore Island. The New York NAM meeting (1984) called upon the Government of France to promptly terminate its occupation over the island.

A referendum on the island's future, which was proposed to be held in 1984, was postponed indefinitely "despite UN several resolutions "reaffirming the sovereignty of the Comoros over the island" while MPM demanded "full departmental status for the island". In March, 1986, Jacques Chirac, the first French Prime Minister to visit Mayotte, assured its people that "they would remain French citizens for as long as they wished".

Reiterating its earlier decisions, the Harare NAM Summit Conference (1986) urged upon the French authorities to restore Mayotte to Comoros in accordance with the OAU resolution OM/PLEN/RES-1(XLIV).

However, Mayotte is still a French military base.

48. Two Decades of Non-Alignment, n. 9, n. 193.
49. Ivo Dvorak, n. 17, p. 143.
50. Twentyfive Years of the Nonaligned Movement, n. 32, n. 115.
52. Ibid.
53. Review of International Affairs (Belgrade), n. 32, n. 50.
(5) REUNION

Reunion is an island situated between Madagascar and Mauritius islands, about 800 km. east of Madagascar. It is a volcanic island fringed by coral reefs. Reunion was a French colony from 1642 to 1946. Like the French Caribbean islands, it was also granted "full departmental status". In 1974, it became an "Overseas Department with the status of a region". Its capital is Saint-Denis.

Reunion is one of the four French Overseas Department - the other three being Martinique, Guadeloupe and Guiana. Their administrative and social structure is almost identical to that of metropolitan France and with regard to their political and legal rights there is complete identity and equality with France. According to a statement of the French Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, there existed between the colonies and France common feelings and traditions as a result of which the people of these territories regarded themselves as an integrated part of French civilization.

The NAM support for the struggle of independence of colonial people has resulted in the establishment of liberation committees in Reunion. Its left-wing political parties demand "increased autonomy" and only a few people are in favour of complete independence.

Reunion has the status of a non-sovereign state.

(6) SEYCHELLES

In 1504, Vasco de Gama discovered the Seychelles Islands. They were seized by the British in 1801. In 1965, three of the 85 islands - Aldabra, Farquhar and Desbroches were separated from the Seychelles and made parts of the Chaqos archipelago under BIOT. In 1974, Seychelles became a stage for large-scale exercises by the CENTO powers (UK, US, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey).

55. PIM, n.26, Vol. 46, No. 6, June, 1975, p. 3.
56. Ibid.
58. Ibid.
The British suppressed the People's United Party (PUP) founded by Albert Rene in the territory. In 1964, the party was recognised as an organisation struggling for liberation by the NAM countries. To counter their influence, the colonialist encouraged J.N. Mancham, the leader of a few businessmen, who formed the Democratic Party (DP) in 1960.

The Algiers NAM Summit Conference (1973) demanded "an end to the colonial presence" in Seychelles and noted that in spite of the tactics of colonialists, its people were marching towards freedom. Elections held in April, 1974, were won by DP. Mancham tried to obstruct the independence of the islands. The Havana NAM Meeting (1975) demanded total decolonization of the territory. Independence to Seychelles was ultimately granted on June 28, 1976, and Mancham became its President and Rene the Prime Minister. James Mancham attended the Colombo NAM Summit Conference (1976). He also established relations of his country with South Africa, Saudi Arabia and the NATO powers.

Within a short span of one year the cost of living in Seychelles went up by 50%. As a result, Mancham was overthrown on June 5, 1977, and Rene assumed the Presidency. He asserted his adherence to the NAM and withdrew his country from the influence of Saudi Arabia.

Mercenary forces employed by Mancham tried to carry out coup in April, 1978, but failed. At a meeting of Progressive countries of the south-western part of the Indian Ocean held in Victoria in April, 1978, President Rene "condemned attempts by the United States, France and Britain to destabilize the countries of the area for the purpose of turning the Indian Ocean into an arsenal". In June, 1978, the PUF changed its name to Progressive Front of the Seychelles People (PSF) and in 1979, at the Havana NAM Summit Conference (1979), Rene called for "concerted action by Africa's progressive governments to counter imperialist threats and aggressions, particularly in the Indian Ocean area".

59. Two Decades of Non-Aligned, n. 9, p. 95.
60. Ibid., p. 109.
61. Ibid., p. 248.
62. Ivo Dvorak, n. 17, n. 620.
63. Ibid., p. 621.
On February 4, 1980, the PFSP condemned "the militarization of
the Indian Ocean by foreign powers under the pretext of the events in
Iran and Afghanistan" and called for "the dismantling of all foreign
military bases in the region, as well as withdrawal of foreign military
forces from Diego Garcia and Mauritius". On December 10 and 11, 1980,
on the occasion of its second national congress, the PFSP reasserted
its solidarity with SWAPO, ANC, POLISARIO Front and the PLO, and other
liberation movements. The Havana NAM meeting (1982) expressed its
indignation over the increased acts of sabotage by South Africa and
kidnapping of citizens of Seychelles, because of its supports of the
liberation movements. Seychelles became member of the NAM in August,
1976, and takes active part in its deliberations.

EXTERNAL TERRITORIES OF AUSTRALIA

(1) CHRISTIAN ISLANDS

The Christian Islands, covering about 135 sq. km. of land area
with no indigenous population, lie 360 km. south of Java. Its adminis­
tration was transferred from Singapore to the United Kingdom on
January 1, 1958, pending final transfer to Australia. It became an
Australian territory on October 1, 1958. The reserves of phosphate in
the island are estimated to last up to 1991.

(2) COCOS (KEELING) ISLANDS

The Cocos (Keeling) Islands, consisting of 27 islands, lie 2,768 km.
north-west of Perth and cover an area of 14 sq. km. Only the main
islands - West, Cocos and Home are inhabited. The Australian Government
purchased the territory from John Clunies-Ross on September 1, 1978,
and established a Council there in July, 1979. In a referendum held
on April 6, 1984, by the Australian Government, under the supervision

64. Ibid.
65. Two Decades of Non-Alignment, n. 9, p. 561.
67. Earlier, Cocos Islands was a British possession in 1887; under
the authority of the Governors of Ceylon in 1878; was annexed to
the Straits Settlement in 1886; and became a colony of Singapore
in 1903. The administration was transferred to the Commonwealth
of Australia on November 23, 1955; see Ibid.
of UN observers, the people by a majority voted in favour of "integration with Australia". The islanders enjoy "the rights, privileges and obligations of Australian citizens."

CONCLUSION

NAM has also played an important role in decolonization in the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean islands. In the Atlantic Ocean, St. Helena and Falkland Islands (Malvinas) are the British colonies. In the Indian Ocean, Comoros, though gained independence on July 6, 1975, is still under French domination. Madagascar (Malagasy) became independent from France on June 26-27, 1960, and Mauritius from Britain on March 12, 1968. Mauritius demands return of Diego Garcia from the United States. Mayotte became independent from France on July 6, 1975. It is claimed and represented by Comoros in the international organizations. It is still a French military base. Reunion has the status of a non-sovereign state of France. Seychelles became independent from Britain on June 28, 1976. Comoros and Seychelles joined the NAM in August, 1976, and Madagascar and Mauritius in September, 1973. Christian and Cocos islands are External Territories of Australia.