

Chapter - VI

THE LIBERATION OF GOA

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Pandit Nehru through Diplomatic efforts succeeded in gaining support for India's stand on Goa and other Portuguese enclaves in India as well as throughout the world. The international complications were much reduced by the non-compliance of Portugal to submit information about non-self governing territories to U.N.O., as required by Article 73 of the U.N. Charter.¹ The Trusteeship Council condemned Portugal for its policy of repression. Thus creating an international atmosphere hostile to Portugal, Pandit Nehru's immediate task was to tackle the Goa issue on its merits, by 'other means'.

In the mean time, the tension between Portugal and India mounted rapidly. Both the countries appeared to be engaged on the border. Portugal had amassed an

1. Please see Appendix II.

army of the strength of 10,000 soldiers in Goa itself. It had recruited 3/4 of the Army from among the Africans of Mozambique. Dusk to dawn curfew was imposed in the Portuguese settlements. Borders were mined and sealed. Added to these, Portuguese soldiers indulged in trespassing Indian borders and shooting innocent villagers just to show off their strength. Frigates with soldiers were being moved to Daman and Diu to strengthen those areas. Portuguese flag was hoisted for the first time over Anjudiv on December 2, 1961 indicating a heavy military build-up on it. Rallies of Mosiga (Cadet Corps) were organised by Portuguese authorities just to show off their military preparedness before the natives of Goa.

Border incidents took place almost everyday. On November 15, 1961, the Portuguese soldiers opened fire from Anjudiv and killed Rajaram Atmaram Kachrekar, a fisherman in a country craft returning after fishing along with 15 other boats. The strait between Anjudiv Island and the Goa coast had always been used for Indian coastal shipping and fishing and it was an

uncalled for provocative act on the part of the Portuguese.

On November 17, 1961, an Indian merchant coastal steamer "Sabarmati" suffered heavy damage due to Portuguese firing off Anjudiv. Mr. Anthony S.D.Penha, the second Engineer was seriously injured.²

On November 19, 1961 the All-India Port and Dock workers Federation decided to organise a world-wide boycott of transport of ships trading with Portugal. The Goa Council for Action set up by the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee called for the observance of the "Goa Week" from December 10, 1961, throughout India to protest against Portuguese imperialism.

On December 1, 1961, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said in Allahabad in a Public meeting that India could no longer tolerate the Portuguese actions in

2. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, Vol.No.XIII, 1961-62, p.18635.

Goa and that it would have to take adequate steps to give them an effective reply. India had waited patiently for 12 years to settle the Goa question peacefully. The recent incidents were most inhuman and undesirable. "We cannot tolerate such acts. We will take necessary steps at the right time."³

While Portugal was making preparations for war, the people of Goa fled to Indian territory out of fear from Goa, Daman and Diu to neighbouring areas. India also moved its troops to border areas as a precautionary measure on December 5, 1961.

On December 7, 1961, the Portuguese soldiers fired at Lakkurkot in the northern and at Tolmati in the southern border for no reason at all. The Portuguese tightened military precautions at strategic places such as airports and wireless stations in all its enclaves including Diu. Mines were laid at key points. Underground nationalists and Portuguese soldiers clashed at several places in Goa.

3. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, Vol.No.XIII, 1961-62, p.18635.

The Indian Government after receiving a report that the Tirukul Creek was mined, warned the Portuguese Government that it would take immediate action if Indian waters were mined, for it would endanger Indian coastal shipping. Major-General K.P. Candeth was appointed as Incharge Commanding Officer of Security of India-Goa Border. Hence, when all things pointed towards the happening of war, Pandit Nehru on December 9, 1961, said that the door to negotiations had not been closed. If Portugal wanted a peaceful solution, it would not have waited so long. It wanted to retain Goa at any cost. Britain offered to mediate and bring about a settlement if both the countries agreed. But for India and Portugal it was high time. Portugal addressed a letter to the President of ^{the} Security Council saying that Portugal was being made a victim of unprovoked aggression by India.

J.K.Galbraith, U.S. Ambassador in India said on December 9, 1961, that U.S.A., supported the U.N. Resolution to set up a Commission to investigate the progress in bringing about the end of colonialism

and called upon both governments not to use force.

On December 10, 1961 at 3.00 a.m., 15 Portuguese soldiers armed with Light Machine Guns attacked Talwade village close to the border near Tirakul Fort and entered Indian border for about a mile before returning. The Indian Police officials guarding the border asked the Government of India for guidance in meeting such situations. While Indian borders were being trespassed by Portuguese soldiers wantonly time and again, the Portuguese government itself made an allegation on December 10, 1961 that 500 acts of sabotage had occurred since emergency was declared in the Portuguese settlements.

On December 11, 1961, Dr. Vasco Garin, Portuguese Delegate to U.N.O. told Journalists in New York that India was ready to attack Goa and that it would attack even if India failed to find a genuine pretext for it. The Portuguese government had therefore alerted the Security Council about the threat to her sovereignty on December 9, 1961 itself.

A Journalist asked the British foreign office spokesman what effect an Indian attack on Goa would have on the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty of Alliance of 1899 and of those dating back to 1373? The British Foreign office spokesman said that there would naturally be no question of Britain engaging in hostilities with India.

By December 16, 1961, the situation had become tense. Intense Diplomatic activity was going on at the highest level in Washington, Delhi, Lisbon and London. Britain and America through their respective ambassadors, Sir Paul Gore-Booth and Mr. J.K. Galbraith, brought pressure on the Indian Government not to use force. What India could do when Portugal refused to negotiate? Both the ambassadors understood the dilemma India was facing. All along India had tried its best to solve the Goa question peacefully, but Portugal was not prepared to part with Goa even though America brought pressure on it.

In Washington, Mr. C.S. Jha, India's permanent representative at the U.N.O. denounced Portugal for

the gravest kind of provocations and said that Goa was a cancer in the body politic of India that must be removed. He criticised NATO allies for giving moral, political and indirect aid to Portugal.

On the evening of December 16, 1961, the Chief of Police in Diu met the Indian official at Ahmednagar checkpoint and said that he would not resist if the Indian Army moved into Diu. India received this information with satisfaction. It indicated the growing panic among Portuguese authorities and the collapse of their morale.

U.Thant, the U.N. Secretary General, sent messages to Dr.Salazar and Pandit Nehru asking them to ensure that the situation did not deteriorate to the extent that it would constitute a threat to peace and to enter into immediate negotiation with a view to arrive at an early solution of the problem in accordance with the principles embodied in the Charter of the U.N.O.

True to their tradition, the Portuguese cold-shouldered the efforts of the U.S., and the U.N. Secretary-General. Once this clear picture emerged, there was no delay on India's part in taking a quick decision and issuing the necessary orders to the armed forces stationed on the borders of the enclaves.

With the boom of guns reverberating across the country-side, the Indian Army moved into Goa just before, mid-night of December 17-18, 1961. Simultaneously Indian war-ships entered Goan waters and the Indian Air-force planes penetrated into the air space over Goa and dropped leaflets telling the people that their hour of freedom was at hand. Army units also moved into Daman and Diu. A part of the 17th Infantry Division entered Goa at a number of points along its 160 mile border. A three-pronged drive supported by medium size tanks, armoured cars and artiallery was wisely devised beforehand.

General I.N.Thapar, Chief of Army Staff, sent a message to troops saying, "You are not going into Goa as conquerors but as protectors."

It. General J.N.Choudhari - G.O.C-in-C, Southern Command, was in overall charge of the "Operation Vijaya". Maj-Gen. K.P.Candeth was the field Commander.

Mr. V.K.K.Menon, the Defence Minister, said that the army had moved into Goa in view of the complete breakdown of the civil administration there and Portuguese provocations. The Army had instructions to use the minimum force necessary. He hoped that the Portuguese would have the good sense not to do anything to make matters worse.

The Government of India had sent an ultimatum to Portuguese Government on December 15, 1961 asking for its withdrawal from Indian Territory 'forth-with'.

By midnight on December 18-19, 1961, Panjim was encircled by troops from all directions. Indian troops were one mile away at the bay of Betim in the north, some 4 miles in the South-East directions as the Army had crossed Ponda already, 4 miles away in the East as the Army was moving in from Velha Goa.

The Indian Army halted till early morning and entered Panjim at 6.00 a.m. on December 19, 1961. Gen.Choudhari supervised the surrender of arms by the Portuguese. The instrument of surrender was signed by the Portuguese Authorities and a Sikh Battalion Commander and the Indian flag was hoisted over the Governor-General's Palace, thus ending Portuguese rule in Goa once for ever.

The Governor-General of Goa, DeSilva and his troops had moved to Fort Vasco-da-Gama near Marmagoea to avoid the onslaught of Indian forces at Panjim, but later all of them surrendered at 11.00 a.m. and the last Portuguese resistance at Marmagoea was put to an end. Daman and Diu surrendered at 8.20 a.m. and 11.10 a.m. respectively the same day.

24 hours after Indian troops had crossed the border at different places, the end of 'Operation Vijaya' was well within sight for, except for some initial encounters, it was practically a walk-over for the Indian Army. There is one more reason for

this quick success. The swift-movement of the Indian Forces made the Portuguese soldiers to blink and they got little time to follow the earlier decided scorched-earth policy in resisting the advancing Indian Forces. Moreover, the Indian Air-Force under the direction of Air-Vice-Marshal A.V. Menon and Pinto did a fine job by strafing the air base of Dabolim and disconnecting radio and telephone lines with Lisbon.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said, - The extraordinary light casualties on either side and the fact that the entire operation was over in 24 hours showed "the correctness of the Indian assessment of the situation. The colonial administration had cracked up and the people wanted and welcomed India.... There was a political vacuum..... The Portuguese could not and did not do anything.....It was only a facade with no strength behind."

It is interesting to note that the list of casualties on either side is insignificant. On the Portuguese side, 1 officer and 16 soldiers and sailors were killed and 39 Portuguese soldiers (of whom 1 was

Portuguese Officer) were wounded and 17 Portuguese soldiers were missing. On the Indian side, 2 Officers, 1 J.C.O., and 19 other ranks were killed and 53 soldiers were injured.⁴ Portugal was only a paper tiger in the 20th century. During the 15th and 16th centuries, the Portuguese might have been the invincible soldiers. But during 20th century, they could not count on their past glory and achievement. They proved to be, as Pandit Nehru has rightly said, 'only a facade with no strength behind them.'

The opinion of two foreign correspondents corroborate with the contention of Government of India.

Mr. Ian Colvia, the special correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, arrived from Panjim to Bombay on December 20, 1961. He was struck by the swift, efficient and orderly manner in which the Indian forces marched in and took over Goa. Life was normal

4. Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1961-62, p.18856.

in Panjim. Public utility services were operating "almost normally." There was no trace of fighting anywhere in the vicinity. He found the local people everywhere waving Indian Flags and it was obvious that there was great relief everywhere that it was all over so soon.

Mr. Paul Grimes, the special correspondent of the New York Times said, "Well equipped Indian Forces moved forth with precision. Even many of their enemies credited them with extreme care in safeguarding civilian population, preserving historical and religious landmarks and treating Portuguese prisoners well..... The Portuguese did not put up any resistance in Goa and there were very few casualties."

African and Asian countries hailed the event as a great one and a victory for anti-colonial forces.

There was a mixed reaction over the use of force by India to liberate Goa, Daman and Diu. But the fact remains true forever that the Portuguese did not move

with the times and this attitude of the Portuguese forced India to take military action to liberate Goa, Daman and Diu.

Under the pressure of Dr. Vasco Garin, the Portuguese Delegate to U.N.O., the Security Council met on December 19, 1961 to discuss the Goa issue. Dr. Omat Loutfi of the U.A.R., was the President of the Security Council at that time. Seven Members, namely, the U.S.A., Great Britain, France, Turkey, Chile, Ecuador and Nationalist China, supported Portugal's request for a Debate while two members, namely the U.S.S.R., and Ceylon opposed; and two other members, namely, United Arab Republic and Liberia abstained. Dr. Loutfi called upon Dr. Garin and Mr. C.S.Jha to state their respective country's cases without a vote.

Mr. C.S.Jha told the Security Council that the elimination of the last vestige of colonialism in India was an article of faith for the Indian people. Charter or no charter, Security Council or no Security Council. He described Goa, Daman and Diu as

an integral part of India unlawfully occupied by Portugal. The Portuguese contention that its possessions in India were a part of the Metropolitan Portugal was a legal fiction.

Mr. Adlai Stevenson made a caustic remark on the use of force by India.

Sir Patrick Dean was shocked at the outbreak of hostilities.

Mr. V. Zorin upheld India's action and rebuked Portugal for not seeing reason.

The Western proposal asking for the withdrawal of Indian forces was supported by seven members of the Security Council and the Afro-Asian proposal upholding India's action was supported by 4 members. If the U.S.S.R., had not come to the rescue of India, Goa question would have become another burning issue in the cold war. The Soviet delegate cast a veto. It was the 99th veto cast by Soviet Russia since the

inception of the U.N.O. The Soviet veto blocked all further developments over the Goa issue to the great relief of India and her Afro-Asian friends.

Mr. Adlai Stevenson considered that the fateful Goa debate might be the first act of a drama which could end in the death of the U.N.O.⁵

"The loss of Goa was a traumatic experience for Dr. Antonio de Oliveira Salazar. He declared Christmas that year a day of general mourning. All Government festivities were called off for a week, including the traditional New Year fire-works display.

Making a statement on Goa, Dr. Salazar said :
"We refuse to accept Indian occupation of Goa as an accomplished fact. We shall have to wait for the international community to redress the offence done to Portuguese sovereignty and restore to it its legitimate rights before a normal situation can be

5. Keessing's Contemporary Archives, 1961-62,
p.18659, (Security Council Debate).

reestablished."

He blamed the 'impotent' allies like the U.K., who had not stood by him."⁶

Dr. Salazar never forgave the Last Portuguese Governor of Goa, Gen. Vassalo de Silva, for disobeying his orders to "burn Goa.... so that Indians would find only the ashes." The Marmugao Port and several vital areas had been filled with explosives. But the Governor refused to give orders for blowing them up.

General Vassalo de Silva was later stripped by Dr. Salazar of his rank and dismissed from service. The Army junta last April (i.e. April 1974) restored his rank. It also recognised Goa's integration with India.⁷

6. The Illustrated Weekly of India, 21-9-1975, p.16.

7. The Illustrated Weekly of India, 21-9-1975, p.16.

The Portuguese Government took vengeance by interning nearly 12,000 Indians living in Portuguese territories, confiscated their property and gave inhuman trouble to them. A weak nation exhibits its anger on helpless people and never shows the courage of fighting with equals. Portugal was no exception. It was deeply disappointed. It had built up a legal myth by describing Goa and other enclaves in India as "overseas provinces of Portugal" or as "Portuguese state in India" to circumvent the U.N. Charter. It had relied on Anglo-Portuguese and NATO Alliance to back its efforts in retaining Goa. It had spread a false propaganda by saying that if Goa merged with the Indian Union, there is danger to the Christians living in Goa. All these ramifications were shattered to pieces by a single blow of "Operation Vijaya" and the Soviet Veto in the Security Council. Portugal nourished great hopes in international field by putting India on the wrong side. But the Afro-Asian nations rallied round India and condemned Portugal itself for not leaving the shores of India early.

"India's resort to use of force in Goa, Daman and Diu was deplored by many countries in the U.N.O. viz., U.K., U.S.A., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, France, the Netherlands, Spain, West Germany. On the other hand, full support for the Indian action was expressed by the Soviet Union, all Soviet Block countries, Yugoslavia, the Arab States, Ghana, Ceylon and Indonesia."⁸

The most piercing speech of Adlai Stevenson in the Security Council has done great damage to the diplomatic relations between India and the U.S.A. It was an uncalled for comment. No such vehemence and venom was to be poured by the delegate of a nation which professed and followed anti-colonial policies. Further Mr. Adlai Stevenson has done the fallacy of equating Goa case with those of Korean War (1950) and Suez Invasion (1956). It shows that Mr. Adlai Stevenson did not know the antecedents of Goa and the real cause for which India took such a drastic step.

8. Keessing's Contemporary Archives, Vol. XIII, 1961-62, p.18659.

Besides exhibiting such gross folly, Mr. Adlai Stevenson dares to prophesy that the U.N.O. would disintegrate. What has happened to U.N.O since 1961? Has the U.N.O dead and gone? U.N.O. is functioning as strong as ever. Hence the conclusion based on wrong facts is rightly disproved at present. The arguments of Mr. Adlai Stevenson are baseless. They might have been made not only to attack India but the U.S.S.R., as well which supported the use of force. But Russia had supported the use of force to achieve a noble purpose, that of ending colonialism. When Portugal did not understand any other language other than those of guns and bombs, India could not help it. India cannot be blamed for it. For it patiently persevered through diplomatic channels to solve the Goa question peacefully. It was only Portugal to be blamed because it wanted to impose and continue 16th century colonialism in India during the latter half of 20th century. It was a ridiculous attempt on the part of Portugal. It richly deserved the admonishing which India did with a single stroke of "Operation Vijaya."

What a joyous moment it was for Goans and Indians alike. Goans were jubilant and celebrated the advent of freedom. Catholics vied with Hindus in welcoming the change. Hundreds of meetings were held and the people of Goa for the first time spoke of freedom, democracy and elections. On December 18, 1961, the bronze bust of Dr. Salazar was demolished. The people wiped out the relics of colonialism by pulling down two more statues of Antonio D'Souza and Infanta don Henriques. ~~at~~ Vasco-da-Gama was renamed as Sambhaji Nagar by the people.⁹ The pent-up national sentiments were exhibited by the people of Goa in many ways. Their dream of reuniting with India after liberation was achieved at last. After India gained independence, the people of Pondicherry had to wait for 7 years to become free and unite with the Indian Union, but Goans had to wait for more than 14 years to achieve this distinction. For a time, there was despair all round in the hearts of Goans and their brethren

9. Goa, Daman & Diu, Department of Information and Tourism, Government of Goa, Daman & Diu, February, 1973, p.1.

across the border. The patience of the people of India including the Goans was rewarded after a long time. When the cherished goal was reached, the joy of the Goans knew no bounds.

"The liberation struggle, whose faint rumblings were first heard in 1580s, which tangibly shook the foreign rule in 1850s, was finally brought to a glorious end by 'Operation Vijaya' on December 19, 1961."¹⁰

10. Ten Years of Liberation - 1961-71; Department of Information and Tourism, Government of Goa, Daman and Diu, 1971, p.22.