

CONFIDENTIAL



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 July 1980

Dear Michael,

Visit by the Prime Minister of
Mauritius

Please refer to my letter of 4 July enclosing a brief for the Mauritius Prime Minister's call on Mrs Thatcher this afternoon. You have asked for supplementary briefing in the light of the adoption of a Resolution on Diego Garcia at the OAU Summit on 4 July. The text of the Resolution is attached (Freetown telegram number 133). We have now learned that the Mauritian Foreign Minister, Sir Harold Walter, will accompany Sir S Ramgoolam and the Mauritian High Commissioner on his call. As arranged, Mr Richard Luce and Mr Derek Day will attend.

Mr Luce had an opportunity to discuss the Resolution with Sir Harold Walter this morning. Sir Harold said that he and his Prime Minister were in no doubt about the importance of Diego Garcia for Western defence interests in the Indian Ocean or about the true source of the threat to stability in the region. They had no wish to get the Americans out of Diego Garcia. But the Mauritian Government faced a difficult political problem. The Opposition charge was that Ramgoolam had shown lack of patriotism and had sold a portion of the national territory (he commented in passing that it was important to describe the £3 m. given to Mauritius in 1965 as development aid and not a payment for the sale of Diego Garcia). Mauritius therefore needed, first, some public affirmation by HMG of its title to sovereignty over Diego Garcia in addition to the existing public undertaking that the island would revert to Mauritius if and when it was no longer required for defence purpose. Second, fresh attention should be given to the statements of intent made at the time of the creation of British Indian Ocean Territory, about seeking opportunities for the employment of Mauritian labour on Diego Garcia and about access for Mauritius in BIOT territory, e.g. fishing rights. Third, Mauritius deserved much greater UK and US economic aid given her helpful political attitudes. Mauritius was at the bottom of the African league table for Western aid; it appeared to be politically more advantageous to be an opponent than a friend of the West.

/The OAU

M O'D B Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL



The OAU Resolution, though unwelcome, does not immediately cause us serious difficulties. However, Walter confirmed that the Resolution (which we understand was passed on the nod without debate with only five members present, including Mauritius and Madagascar) will now go forward to the Non-Aligned Movement and thence no doubt to the UN General Assembly. It is therefore likely to gather an increasing head of steam behind it.

We do not think it would be profitable to take on Ramgoolam directly on the question of sovereignty. HMG's title to Diego Garcia is clear though qualified by the public undertaking that it would revert to Mauritius if no longer required for defence purposes. Mauritian ministers also fully understood and accepted the purpose for which BIOT was created. A statement by the the Colonial Secretary in the House on 10 November 1965 is attached. As recently as 27 June Sir S Ramgoolam stated that Diego Garcia 'does not belong to Mauritius'.

The Prime Minister therefore may wish to say that we understand the political problems facing the Mauritian Government over Diego Garcia, arising from the threat to Western interests and to those of Mauritius from recent Soviet actions in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean area. HMG have no doubt as to their title over BIOT: but this matter must not be allowed to cloud the fundamental unity of purpose between the two governments. It is important that each should act in ways which will not cause unnecessary difficulties for the other. We wish to keep in the closest touch and will be ready to consider whether we could take any steps which would underline HMG's undertaking that Diego Garcia would revert to Mauritius if no longer required for defence purposes.

Yours ever
Roderic Lyne

(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

CONFIDENTIAL

GRS 155

UNCLASSIFIED

(A)

FM FREETOWN 051130Z JUL 80
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 133 OF 05 JULY
INFO ROUTINE PORT LOUIS

YOUR TELNO 125: OAU SUMMIT: DIEGO GARCIA.

1. IT WAS ANNOUNCED AT THE CLOSING PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY THAT THE SUMMIT HAD ADOPTED THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:-

PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 1 PARAGRAPH 2 OF THE OAU CHARTER WHICH STIPULATES THAT " THE ORGANISATION SHALL INCLUDE THE CONTINENTAL AFRICAN STATES, MADAGASCAR AND OTHER ISLANDS SURROUNDING AFRICA;

CONSIDERING THAT ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE ORGANISATION IS THE RESPECT FOR THE SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF ITS STATES:

AWARE OF THE FACT THE DIEGO GARCIA HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN INTEGRAL PART OF MAURITIUS:

RECOGNISING THAT DIEGO GARCIA WAS NOT CEDED TO BRITAIN FOR MILITARY PURPOSES:

REALISING THAT THE MILITARISATION OF DIEGO GARCIA IS A THREAT TO AFRICA AND TO THE INDIAN OCEAN AS A ZONE OF PEACE:

DEMANDS THAT DIEGO GARCIA BE UNCONDITIONALLY RETURNED TO MAURITIUS AND THAT ITS PEACEFUL CHARACTER BE MAINTAINED.

2. SO FAR AS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ASCERTAIN THE RESOLUTION WAS TABLED BY MAURITIUS DIRECT TO THE SUMMIT AT THE LAST MOMENT AND ACCEPTED ON THE NOD. IF MAURITIUS MADE ANY STATEMENT IT HAS NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC.

FCO PLEASE PASS

MORGAN

[THIS TELEGRAM WAS NOT ADVANCED]
[REPEATED AS REQUESTED]

F I L E S

EAD
DEFENCE D
NEWS D
OID
PS/MR LUCE
SIR L ALLINSON

Wednesday 10th November, 1965

Defence facilities in the Indian Ocean

In reply to a Parliamentary Question the Secretary of State made the following statement in the House of Commons on Wednesday November 10th:-

"With the agreement of the Governments of Mauritius and the Seychelles new arrangements for the administration of certain islands were introduced by an Order in Council made on the 8th November. The islands are the Chagos Archipelago, some 1,200 miles north-east of Mauritius, and Aldabra, Farquhar and Desroches in the western Indian Ocean. Their populations are approximately 1,000, 100, 172 and 112 respectively. The Chagos Archipelago was formerly administered by the Government of Mauritius and the other three islands by that of the Seychelles. The islands will be called the British Indian Ocean Territory and will be administered by a Commissioner. It is intended that the islands will be available for the construction of defence facilities by the British and U.S. Governments, but no firm plans have yet been made by either Government. Compensation will be paid as appropriate."

The cost of compensating the Company which exploits the plantations and the cost of resettling elsewhere those inhabitants there who can no longer remain/will be the responsibility of the British Government. In addition, the British Government has undertaken in recognition of the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius, to provide additional grants amounting to £3m. for expenditure on development projects in Mauritius to be agreed between the British and the Mauritius Governments. These grants will be over and above the allocation earmarked for Mauritius in the next period of C. D. & W. assistance.

The population of the Chagos Archipelago consists, apart from civil servants and estate managers, of a labour force, together with their dependants, which is drawn from Mauritius and Seychelles and employed on the copra plantations. The total number of Mauritians in the Chagos Archipelago is 638, of whom 176 are adult men employed on the plantations.

Chief Secretary's Office

Port Louis,

10th November, 1965.

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME 8 JULY 1980
MAURITIUS AND DIEGO GARCIA

PA
MS (CF-614)
7/1/81

6

LINE TO TAKE

Angol/Mauritian Relations

1. Excellent relations of long standing. Ties strengthened following the visit by my Hon Friend the Member for Shoreham in June.

Purpose of Visit by PM of Mauritius

2. Took advantage of his return from the OAU summit in Freetown to have an exchange of views.

What was Discussed

3. There was a general discussion which included political, economic and cultural matters. Diego Garcia was one of the subjects covered. Both governments recognise the threat of peace and stability in the Indian Ocean area and the need to meet this.

Use of Diego Garcia

4. Mauritius Ministers agreed to the detachment of the Chagos Islands and were fully aware of the purpose for which British Indian Ocean Territory was established.

/SUPPLEMENTARIES

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Has Mauritius made a claim for the return of Diego Garcia

1. Both governments understand each others interests. There was a useful discussion in the light of the common concern for stability in the region.

(if pressed)

The circumstances in which the British Indian Ocean Territory was established in 1965 are a matter of public record, including the reversion of Diego Garcia to Mauritius if no longer required for defence purposes.

Do we accept that Diego Garcia:

(i) 'has always been an integral part of Mauritius'

(ii) 'was not ceded to Britain for military purposes'

2. The Chagos Islands were administered as part of the Crown Colony of Mauritius until the establishment of the British Indian Ocean Territory in 1965. Mauritius Ministers agreed to the detachment and the construction of a defence facility in Diego Garcia.

HMG's attitude to the OAU Resolution

3. Resolutions of the OAU are for members of the Organisation. We wish to see peace and stability in the Indian Ocean area. The threat to this does not come from the West.

BACKGROUND NOTE

The 1965 Statement Concerning the Detachment of the Chagos Islands (Diego Garcia) from Mauritius

1. The 1965 negotiations with the Colonial Government of Mauritius were complicated and extended over many months. No formal published text of the agreement was issued. Understanding was reached on the various points by triangular exchanges of telegrams and letters between the Colonial Office, the Governor of Mauritius and the Mauritius Council of Ministers. The Premier of Mauritius at that time was Sir Seeweesagur Ramgoolam. During these negotiations it was made clear to the Mauritian side that it was the intention to reserve Diego Garcia for the defence needs of the United States and the United Kingdom. On 5 November 1965 the Governor reported that the Mauritian Ministers had agreed to the detachment of the Chagos Islands subject to the clarification of certain points. One of these points concerned the return of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius. HMG confirmed that if facilities on the Islands were no longer needed for defence purposes, they would be returned to Mauritius.

2. A statement was made in the House of Commons on 10 November 1965 outlining the agreement and a similar statement was made in Mauritius at the same time (copy attached). Further information on the agreement was disclosed during Question Time in the Mauritius Legislative Assembly on 21 December 1965 when it was made clear that the Islands were to be used for defence facilities and that they would be returned to Mauritius when no longer needed.

Wednesday 10th November, 1965

Defence facilities in the Indian Ocean

Reply to a Parliamentary Question the Secretary of State made the following statement in the House of Commons on Wednesday November 10th:-

"With the agreement of the Governments of Mauritius and the Seychelles new arrangements for the administration of certain islands were introduced by an Order in Council made on the 8th November. The islands are the Chagos Archipelago, some 1,200 miles north-east of Mauritius, and Aldabra, Farquhar and Desroches in the western Indian Ocean. Their populations are approximately 1,000, 100, 172 and 112 respectively. The Chagos Archipelago was formerly administered by the Government of Mauritius and the other three islands by that of the Seychelles. The islands will be called the British Indian Ocean Territory and will be administered by a Commissioner. It is intended that the islands will be available for the construction of defence facilities by the British and U.S. Governments, but no firm plans have yet been made by either Government. Compensation will be paid as appropriate."

The cost of compensating the Company which exploits the plantations and the cost of resettling elsewhere those inhabitants there who can no longer remain/will be the responsibility of the British Government. In addition, the British Government has undertaken in recognition of the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius, to provide additional grants amounting to £3m. for expenditure on development projects in Mauritius to be agreed between the British and the Mauritius Governments. These grants will be over and above the allocation earmarked for Mauritius in the next period of C. D. & W. assistance.

The population of the Chagos Archipelago consists, apart from civil servants and estate managers, of a labour force, together with their dependants, which is drawn from Mauritius and Seychelles and employed on the copra plantations. The total number of Mauritians in the Chagos Archipelago is 638, of whom 176 are adult men employed on the plantations.

Chief Secretary's Office

Port Louis,

10th November, 1965.

Extract Debates of the Legislative Assembly
(Mauritius)

21st December, 1965

Excision of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius

(No. N/266) Mr. C.G. Duval (Curepipe) asked the Premier and Minister of Finance: (SIR SEEWOSAGUR RAMGOOLAM)

Whether, in exchange for the agreement of this Government to the excision of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius, the following obligations have definitely been undertaken by the British Government:-

- (a) the British Government will ensure the defence of Mauritius against external aggression and British troops would intervene in case of a 'coup d'etat' against the legal Government of Mauritius, if so requested by the Government;
- (b) all fishing facilities around Diego will be safeguarded;
- (c) all the meteorological data collected in Diego Garcia will be at the expense of Great Britain and made available to Mauritius free of charge;
- (d) an aerodrome will be constructed in Diego Garcia, which could be made use of by planes coming to and going from Mauritius, in case Plaisance Aerodrome is out of use, for one reason or another;
- (e) in case America and England do not for any reason make use of the Chagos Archipelago, the Archipelago will be returned to Mauritius with such installations as can be made use of by this country;
- (f) all the Mauritians now living in Diego will be resettled in Mauritius. The costs of repatriation will be met from the British Exchequer and all costs of rehousing them will be met by the British, and that work would be found for them by the British Government;
- (g) that Great Britain will buy all building materials required and use Mauritian labour for the construction of the base;
- (h) Mauritians trained at H.M.S. Mauritius will be employed at the telecommunications centre in Diego Garcia;
- (i) that if mines of bauxite and uranium were to be found in the Chagos Archipelago, Mauritius would be the only country entitled to exploit them; and

(1) that in exchange for the agreement for the excision of the Chagos Archipelago, Great Britain will grant Rs. 4 million for the Mauritius University and one million one hundred and fifty rupees annually for ten years.

If so, whether in view of the contradictory statement made by the Secretary of State for the Colonies on Wednesday the 10th November, circulated at the last sitting, Government will publish the correspondence between the British Government and the Mauritian Government in that connection?

If not, whether he will state which of the items have not been definitely agreed to by the British Government?

Mr. Forget (on behalf of the Premier and Minister of Finance):

(1) (a) I would refer the Hon. Member to the penultimate paragraph of the closing speech by the Secretary of State for the Colonies at the end of the Mauritius Constitutional Conference in September, the Report of which was subsequently published in Mauritius as Sessional Paper No. 6 of 1965.

(b) I am not clear what the Hon. Member means by the word "safeguarded". So far as I am aware the only fishing that now takes place in the territorial waters of Diego Garcia is casual fishing by those employed there and as the Hon. Member is aware, they will be resettled elsewhere.

(c) The question of responsibility for the collection of meteorological data in Diego Garcia has not been discussed in detail, but the British Government is alive to the great importance of such data to Mauritius and no difficulty is foreseen. It may be of interest to the Hon. Member to know that members of the World Meteorological Organisation are required to supply each other with weather data and that the Director of the Meteorological Services has never heard of a charge being made.

(d) No decision has yet been taken to construct any facilities on Diego Garcia. Any airfield which might be constructed on Diego Garcia would be intended for purely defence purposes but if an aircraft were obliged to have recourse to it in such an emergency as is indicated in the question, I have no doubt that permission would be granted.

(e) If the British Government decides that the Chagos Archipelago is no longer required for defence purposes, the islands will be returned to Mauritius. The question what would happen in such circumstances to any installations in the Chagos Archipelago is, of course, a hypothetical one, and would no doubt be discussed between the interested Governments in the light of practical requirements and considerations at the time.

- (f) The British Government has undertaken to meet the full cost of the resettlement of Mauritians at present living in the Chagos Archipelago.
- (g) The extent to which it would be practicable to use Mauritian labour and materials is a matter for further consideration when the respective requirements and responsibilities for construction of the British and American Governments have been defined. But the desire of the Mauritius Government that Mauritian labour and building materials should be used to the maximum extent has been brought to the notice of the British Government.
- (h) I refer the Honourable Member to the first sentence of my reply to question (d) above.
- (i) The Honourable Member's question is, again, a hypothetical one and I should make clear that there has never been any indication of minerals in the Chagos Archipelago, which is a string of coral atolls. The British Government has no intention of allowing prospecting for minerals while the islands are being used for defence purposes. For the position thereafter, I would refer the Honourable Member to the first sentence of the reply to Question (e).
- (j) No Sir. I would refer the Honourable Member to the statement on the Chagos Archipelago already issued by the Government and to what my colleague the Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs said in the House on Tuesday the 7th December 1965 in relation to financial aid from Great Britain for the University of Mauritius.
- The aid for the University does not form part of the £3,000,000 of additional aid referred to in the former statement and, like the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago, is an illustration of the mutual association between Mauritius and Britain to which the Government attaches importance.