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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

11 August 1980

Yes out!
Prime Minister

Dear Mike,

*You asked for details of the
1965 discussions. Content to*

Call by the Prime Minister of Mauritius *leave FCO to pursue
question of Mauritian
labour &
materials
at X?*

In his letter of 8 July, Michael Alexander asked for an account of the exact nature of the Anglo/Mauritius discussions in 1965 and whether there was any substance in Sir S Ramgoolam's assertion that these discussions were not reflected in the public statements made about them at the time.

The records show that Mauritius ministers were willing, indeed eager, to agree to the detachment of the Chagos; their object was to obtain the best possible price. They pressed HMG to lease Diego Garcia because they thought that an offer to lease would enable Mauritius to extract a high price from the Americans, whom they knew to be intended users of the island. Discussions were largely taken up with an explanation by the British side that the Americans were only prepared to construct a facility if the UK retained full sovereignty and with a gradual talking down of Mauritian expectations. However, Mauritius Ministers can have been in little doubt of the nature of the facility. The record of a meeting with Sir S Ramgoolam and his colleagues on 13 September 1965 states that 'The Secretary of State (Mr Antony Greenwood) explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposals for defence facilities in the Chagos Archipelago.', and later that 'it was explained that ... the United States Government would construct communications and support facilities on the Islands and Britain and the United States would use the facilities jointly'. At a further meeting with the Colonial Secretary on 20 September, Ramgoolam (still pursuing his objective of extracting concessions from the Americans) said:

'The United States was spending vast sums of money elsewhere in the world on bases that were not secure. Admittedly Diego Garcia was not being used at present; but in the future it might be of great strategic significance. Mauritius must obtain some significant benefit from making it available. He did not pretend to know the military significance of Diego Garcia but, in considering compensation for Mauritius, the scale on which the United States has accepted expenditure on bases elsewhere had to be borne in mind.'

/It is clear

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It is clear, therefore, that Ramgoolam was well aware of what Mauritius was agreeing to, and that Mr Greenwood's statement in the House on 10 November, 1965 ('It is intended that the Islands will be available for the construction of defence facilities by the British and US Governments.') correctly reflected discussions between HMG and Mauritius ministers.

There were, however, other points pressed by Mauritius ministers during the negotiations which were not, I understand, raised by Sir S Ramgoolam with the Prime Minister, but were by Sir Harold Walter with Mr Luce. I attach an extract from the record of 23 September 1965 summarising the terms under which Mauritius ministers agreed to the detachment of the Chagos. Some (£3 m. compensation; conclusion of an Anglo-Mauritius defence agreement - terminated in 1976) were put into effect shortly afterwards; others (consultation in the event of internal disorder on Mauritius) have never become actual; others (Mauritian wish for increased sugar quotas in the US) are simply expressions of hope and in any case time-expired; the understanding that if the Islands were no longer required for defence purposes they would revert to Mauritius has been publicly reaffirmed, most recently by the Prime Minister in the House on 11 July.

X | Sir H Walter, however, did raise with Mr Luce the use of labour and materials from Mauritius on Diego. You will see from the 1965 record that HMG undertook 'to do their best to persuade the American government to use labour and materials from Mauritius for construction work in the Islands'. This was only an expression of best endeavours; construction work did not begin until the early 1970s; when it started the US authorities operated not from the region but from their military establishments in the Far East; it is unlikely that Mauritius could offer anything that Americans would want or not obtain more easily elsewhere. Because of the removal of the Ilois community from the Chagos to Mauritius in the early 1970s, an attempt to engage Mauritius contract labour for Diego would be politically awkward for us. However, now that Sir H Walter has reverted to the question, it is desirable that we should be seen to have re-examined it. We will discuss this with the Americans with a view to briefing our High Commission in Port Louis to speak to the Mauritians, if the matter remains live.

I am copying this letter to Brian Norbury (Ministry of Defence) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

yours via
Robin Lyne
(R M J Lyne)
Private Secretary

Mike Pattison Esq
10 Downing Street

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EXTRACT OF A MEETING HELD IN LANCASTER HOUSE ON

23RD SEPTEMBER, 1965

MAURITIUS DEFENCE MATTERS

'Summing up the discussions, the Secretary of State asked whether he could inform his colleagues that Dr Ramgoolam, Mr Bissoondoyal and Mr Mohamed were prepared to agree to the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago on the understanding that he would recommend to his colleagues the following:

- (i) negotiations for a defence agreement between Britain and Mauritius;
- (ii) in the event of independence an understanding between the two governments that they would consult together in the event of a difficult internal security situation arising in Mauritius;
- (iii) compensation totalling up to £3 m. should be paid to the Mauritius Government over and above direct compensation to landowners and the cost of resettling others affected in the Chagos Islands;
- (iv) the British Government would use their good offices with the United States Government in support of Mauritius' request for concessions over sugar imports and the supply of wheat and other commodities;
- (v) that the British Government would do their best to persuade the American Government to use labour and materials from Mauritius for construction work in the Islands;

/(vi) the

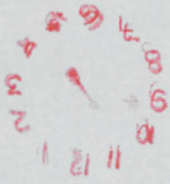
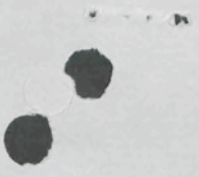
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- (vi) the British Government would use their good offices with the US Government to ensure that the following facilities in the Chagos Archipelago would remain available to the Mauritius Government as far as practicable:
 - (a) navigational and meteorological facilities;
 - (b) fishing rights;
 - (c) use of air strip for emergency landing and for refuelling civil planes without disembarkation of passengers;
- (vii) that if the need for the facilities on the Islands disappeared the islands should be returned to Mauritius;
- (viii) that the benefit of any minerals or oil discovered in or near the Chagos Archipelago should revert to the Mauritius Government.'

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12 AUG 1980

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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

13 August, 1980

Thank you for your letter of 11 August, with information about the 1965 Anglo/Mauritius discussions.

The Prime Minister has seen this. She is satisfied that Sir S Ramgoolam was well aware of what Mauritius was agreeing to.

In respect of the question of use of labour and materials from Mauritius, the Prime Minister is content with your recommendation that HMG should be seen to have re-examined the question, and that you will arrange for this to be discussed with the Americans with a view to briefing our High Commission in Port Louis to speak to the Mauritians should the matter remain live.

I am copying this letter to Brian Norbury (Ministry of Defence) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

M. A. PATTISON

R M J Lyne, Esq
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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