

DEPT. DISTRIBUTION ORIGIN/ACTION				DEPARTMENT OF STATE		FILE DESIGNATION	
<div style="position: relative;"> 5 Ref Say </div>				AIRGRAM			
Original to be Filed in _____				Decentralized Files _____			
HANDLING INDICATOR				CONFIDENTIAL		NO. _____	
TO : Department of State				RECEIVED DEPARTMENT OF STATE			
INFO : American Embassy LONDON Department of Defense American Embassy NAIROBI				JAN 9 1 17 PM 1972			
FROM : American Embassy PORT LOUIS				RS/AN ANALYSIS BRANCH		DATE: December 20, 1971	
SUBJECT : The Ilois of Diego Garcia: A Preliminary Report on Their Condition and Recommendations for Assistance				REF :			
<p>SUMMARY: One year ago the Embassy received a seven-part flash cable (State 202722) announcing the establishment of a naval communications facility on Diego Garcia. During the past year there has been an intermittent and often inconsistent flow of messages relating to the future of the 1968-1971 inhabitants of the island (hereafter referred to as Ilois, whether technically Seychellois or born in Mauritius or on Diego and whether British or Mauritian citizens or dual nationals). The last of the Ilois were removed from the Chagos Archipelago by November 1971; many of them are now located in Mauritius. <u>To our knowledge, there exists no operative plan and no firm allocation of funds to compensate them for the hardship of the transfer from their former home and their loss of livelihood.</u> We recognize that primary responsibility for this problem lies with HMG, but doubt that this would give us much protection should public criticism develop. Moreover, the USG has a moral responsibility for the well-being of these people who were involuntarily moved at our request. Aside from receiving information as to the status of HMG, the GOM, and Moulinie Ltd. efforts to implement measures for the Ilois, the Embassy believes we have <u>regrettably neglected our obligation toward them.</u> We recommend that early and specific exchanges with HMG be undertaken in order to assure the welfare of the Ilois and that authority for this essentially political matter be appropriately centralized within the Department.</p>							
* * * * *				CONFIDENTIAL			
FORM 10-64 DS-323							
Drafted by: _____				Drafting Date: 12/20/71		Phone No.: _____	
Clearances: _____				Contents and Classification Approved by: _____		AMB:WDBrewer	

PM/R	REP	AF	ARA
EUR	FE	NEA	CU
5			
INR	E	P	IO
6	4		5
L	FBO	AID	
3		20	
	S/S	PM	GR
	16	2	1
			ORM
			2
AGR	COM	FRB	INT
LAB	TAR	TR	XMB
AIR	ARMY	NAVY	OSD
5	3	7	34
USIA	NSA	CIA	
	3	16	
	10		

SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION

PM 5 54

NO POSTROUTING			
TO:	Action	Info.	Initials
ADM			
POB			
POL			
ECON			
CONS			
ADM			
AID			
USIS			
FILE			

Action Taken:

Date:

Initials:

Drafted by:

DCM:HPrecht:AMB:WDBrewer:

Drafting Date: 12/20/71

Phone No.:

Contents and Classification Approved by:

AMB:WDBrewer

jlb

CONFIDENTIAL

-2-

Number and Condition of the Ilois. Although our files contain conflicting estimates of the number of people involved, the British High Commission here now estimates that there are 1000 Ilois in Mauritius. (These include both a group which arrived in 1968 and some who reached here this year.) A more exact figure will be reported when the current GOM census of the Ilois is completed. Additionally, possibly 300 Ilois have been transferred to Agalega (a "dependency" of Mauritius) or the Seychelles. Those on Agalega include families which were moved from Diego earlier this year to Peros Benos and Solomon; they were soon re-transferred from those islands because the UK wished to avoid an inquiry into their condition by the UNGA Committee of 24.

We know almost nothing of the number or status of the Ilois on Agalega, except that the local Catholic Church is sending them a school teacher. We strongly suspect that they are badly treated, for Marcel Moulinie of Moulinie Ltd., who managed the copra plantations on Diego, also operates the Agalega plantation. He is described by the HiCom (protect) and visiting U. S. Naval officers from Diego as the "worst kind of Franco-Mauritian," a "19th-century slave master" and as one who, though charming with his "equals," has only the faintest paternalistic concern for his employees. Before the Navy came to Diego, mass had not been celebrated for the Catholic Ilois for two years; there was no provision for medical care or constitutional justice; there was one school teacher for over 500 children. According to the press, copra workers received Rs. 25* per month, housing, and a weekly ration of 10 lbs. of rice, 1/2 litre of oil, 1 lb. dried beans, and 1/4 lb. salt. We have heard various reports of the mental and physical cruelty that Moulinie inflicted on the Ilois in the months before their departure from Diego, e.g. leaving them without food, without information as to their future, and using physical force to make them board the departing vessel. This is the man whom the British asked to develop Agalega as a resettlement scheme. In effect, the Ilois served as Moulinie's indentured labor; but, as a local priest observes, Diego was their home. "They liked it there, and most would go back." Besides, many were better off then than now.

We have not inquired deeply into the condition of Ilois in Mauritius because we did not wish to excite local political appetites and have noted the Department's position that this issue should be left completely to the British. Our information is thus gathered from press reports and casual conversations. The Ilois have been arriving here since 1960. Some came freely; others came on vacation and were prohibited from returning to Diego. Those workers who left Diego this year were promised

* \$1.00 = Rs. 5.27

CONFIDENTIAL

AS

@ least 1300

M. Moulinie

only 2 pp.

DECLASSIFIED
 Authority NND 969052
 By SV NARA Date 11/18/85

81-Num 70-73, 59/150/67/27/6

Bx 3090

CONFIDENTIAL

-3-

Rs. 500 in severance pay by Moulinie; according to the press, this money has not been delivered. In addition, the workers have several other unsettled wage claims against Moulinie and his principals in Mauritius, Rogers and Co.

No special provision was made to receive the returning Ilois in Mauritius, and they have lived where they could find accommodations, usually with friends or relatives. Many are concentrated in communities on the outskirts of Port Louis, one of which is a public housing project abandoned during the 1968 Moslem-Creole riots. Those who cannot find work in the hard-pressed Mauritian economy receive normal GOM relief payments. For example, a family with three children below age 14 can receive Rs. 10 per month if their income does not exceed Rs. 225 per month. Widows, orphans, and the infirm may have monthly "outdoor relief," i.e., Rs. 8 per child, Rs. 15 per adult, and half of the rent payment up to Rs. 12. The British have agreed to compensate the GOM for these relief payments and understand the total amount due has now reached Rs. 300,000.

British Rehabilitation Efforts. Rereading a year's messages on this subject, one is impressed with the haphazard nature of British thinking on this subject and the apparent absence of any real determination to deal with the problem speedily and effectively. One of the most comprehensive statements (London 4528) showed British relocation "hopes ... pinned primarily on Agalegan development option," including a 4 to 5-year subsidy as Moulinie established new copra plantings there. Reports, consultations, a detailed plan, and GOM and HMG approval were foreseen. However, this large-scale Agalegan resettlement project (100 families) has now apparently been abandoned as, according to the British HiCom, Moulinie has refused to expand production and employment because of his fears that the GOM might later take over a more valuable plantation. Parenthetically, it should be noted that the British have not found it easy to deal with Moulinie, since he tends to hide behind the excuse that his "Board of Directors" would not agree to a given proposal.

To rehabilitate the Ilois in Mauritius, the British have unsuccessfully sought to encourage the GOM to produce a development scheme which HMG would finance. This initiative was foredoomed on two accounts. First, it would be politically impossible to single out the Creole Ilois for special projects using scarce resources (land or industrial opportunities) while the unemployed local Hindus, Creoles, and Moslems received no such benefits. Second, the GOM has lacked the imagination, drive, and managerial talent to use existing UK aid money; it could hardly be expected to take on a new special project. The HiCom now realizes this and is convinced that the only feasible rehabilitation project is a lump sum

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

-4-

payment to the Ilois. The HiCom says Prime Minister Ramgoolam is almost in agreement on this approach.

London 1445 of February 19 stated that the British estimated spending a total of less than half a million sterling on rehabilitation. Three months later London 4528 spoke of spending a quarter million pounds on Agelegan development in addition to Rs. 500/^{each} to workers in dislocation pay. This compares with the lowest wage for Mauritian unskilled workers of about Rs. 1,500 annually. Mauritian Creoles are not generally thrifty, future-oriented people, and large lump-sum payments would predictably not last long or be wisely spent in their hands. Additionally, the GOM will have to assume the burden of social services for the Ilois and should be appropriately compensated. We believe an equipped vocational training school, open to all, would be useful as a project grant for the GOM.

USG Responsibility and Possible Political Ramifications. It seems a matter of common sense to us that the USG, which required that the Ilois be removed from Diego and which resisted GOM and HMG efforts to permit Ilois to remain as employees of the facility, should be concerned over this issue from two points of view: (a) We cannot avoid moral responsibility for the situation we have done so much to create; and (b) we would find ourselves subject to censure at the UN and before world opinion should the problem ever be ventilated by unfriendly elements. The legal aspects of our responsibility are spelled out in a memorandum from I dated December 28, 1970. Regrettably, the record available to us shows that we have done almost nothing to define in concrete terms, or to meet, our legal and moral obligations toward the Ilois. Instead, we have followed the guidance laid down in State 019430 that "basic responsibility clearly British under terms BIOT Agreement..." No line of reasoning justifying this position was advanced nor was any citation from the Agreement offered, but it is interesting that, "USG also realizes it will share in any criticism levied at British for failing meet their responsibilities re inhabitants' welfare." Numbered point 2(c) of the Agreement does make clear that "measures to ensure the welfare of the inhabitants are taken" but does not say clearly by whom.

The present GOM has shown only moderate and sporadic concern for the welfare and rights of the Ilois, generally becoming interested in their problem when needed by opposition politicians. Similarly, the latter have not pushed a true campaign on behalf of the Ilois. Clearly, the 1300 miserable and uneducated refugees have no political clout locally. Nor is it clear that this issue is likely to provoke much stir at the UN, should a future GOM make an issue of the sale of Diego to the British.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

-5-

The Ilois presently have no organization, and their current status does not constitute a serious political problem for the U. S. Nevertheless, we believe it would be the best of wisdom to deal with this problem before, rather than after, it could become a political football. Moreover, we believe that justice should be done.

Action Requested. The plight of the Ilois is a classic example of perpetuation of hardship through bureaucratic neglect. Not only is responsibility for the Diego issue spread within the USG, but the problem is further complicated because of the essential self-interest of Moulinie Ltd., the evident lack of any real GOM concern, and British efforts so far to cope with these problems. To help deal with this situation, we recommend the following:

- That early specific exchanges be undertaken with HMG with a view to undertaking prompt measures to insure the welfare of the Ilois within the meaning of paragraph 2(c) of the US/UK Exchange of Notes of December 30, 1966; and
- That responsibility for following this essentially political issue be centralized within the appropriate Bureau of the Department. Such centralization would be designed to facilitate full study and recommendations regarding the magnitude of this problem and the extent of measures which the USG should appropriately take to resolve it. Among relevant issues are the following:
 - (a) Some specific timetable for the accomplishment of particular actions;
 - (b) Clarification, and possible modification, of existing responsibility as among HMG, the GOM, the USG, and Moulinie Ltd. for the performance of prescribed activities;
 - (c) The sum to be paid to each evacuated Ilois. We believe this should include consideration of compensation on the basis of individuals, rather than limited to each worker as presently contemplated; and
 - (d) The question of how best compensation should be paid to the GOM. On this point, we believe some concrete project which would benefit all Mauritians, such as a contribution of funds, in whole or part, for a vocational training school, is to be preferred to a simple transfer of funds which might be misused by the GOM or confined solely to the Ilois who, after all, form only a portion of the Mauritian citizenry.

BREWER

Hpr

CONFIDENTIAL