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Nov 5 8 41 AM 1971

RS/AN  
ANALYSIS BRANCH

FROM : Amembassy PORT LOUIS

DATE: 10/30/71

SUBJECT : Diego Garcia Ilois

REF : Port Louis 0995  
PM

On October 24, Maurice Lesage, Leader of the Opposition, asked the Prime Minister in the Legislative Assembly for details concerning the former inhabitants of Diego Garcia. The Prime Minister's statement of reply is enclosed.

BREWER

Enclosure: att N.M.  
As stated

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Response of the Prime Minister to a question of the  
Honorable Maurice Lesage

Sir,

Honourable Members are aware that a few islands of Chagos Archipelago were handed over in 1965 to the British Government who then established what is now known as the British Indian Ocean Territory.

People who were working there have since that time been coming back to Mauritius on the expiry of their contract. Some of them have been able to find suitable employment in Mauritius or Agalega; others, who are over 60 are drawing old age pension and those who have not been able to find employment are assisted by the Public Assistance Department.

A census of these workers was carried out recently and a communique has been published inviting those who have not yet registered or have changed their addresses to notify the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of their whereabouts.

On the statement published in the press regarding the imprisonment of 116 workers expelled from Diego, I am advised that, with the reduction of activities in that Island, the workers were given the option of working in Agalega, Peros Banhos or Salomon Island or to return to Mauritius. 8 employees with their families making a total of 14 persons, opted to come back to Mauritius whilst the rest agreed to work in Agalega, Peros Banhos or Salomon Island. Those who had opted for work in those islands were paid a disturbance allowance of Rs. 500. The other 8 employees and their families were transferred to Seychelles on the 30th September and are returning to Mauritius. They will be paid all monies due to them under their contracts by Messrs. Rogers and Co. who are the representatives of the employees. Due to lack of other suitable accomodation they were, during their stay in Seychelles, housed in an unused modern prison building completely separated from the main prison building, and were supplied with cooked food.

Ever since the question of the rehabilitation of persons from the Chagos archipelago was raised, I have constantly been assured by the British Government of their readiness to cooperate in resettling all Mauritians evacuated from that area. Possible resettlement plans are now under

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investigation. These plans will be designed to take into account both the wishes and the best interests of the people concerned and will cover both those now being evacuated and others already in Mauritius.

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LAB	TAR	TR	XMB	SUBJECT : Resettlement Diego Garcia Ilois			
AIR 5	ARMY 3	NAVY 6	OSD 34	REF :			
USIA 3	NSA 3	CIA 16		<p>In a further discussion with British High Commissioner Carter on October 27, he stated that HMG had initially left to Moulinie of Chagos-Agalega Ltd. the preparation of a resettlement scheme on Agalega for the non-Seychellois Ilois from Diego Garcia. Moulinie had at some point indicated he preferred not to do this. He alleged that unspecified "Directors" of his company would press for more elaborate plans than were necessary in order to obtain greater British financial help. Accordingly, Moulinie and BIOT administrator Todd are now working together in the Seychelles to produce an acceptable resettlement plan which HMG will finance. Meanwhile the Ilois on Peros Banhos have received their "disturbance allowances" and will gradually be moved to Agalega as the Todd/Moulinie project can be developed.</p> <p>Carter noted that the situation with respect to Mauritian Ilois who had returned here is more complex. He had understood that there were only a limited number of such people but has now been told that there are more than 400 heads of family here. More substantial funds would thus be required to relocate them on Agalega or in Mauritius. The question has been discussed with Foreign Ministry Permanent Secretary Burrenchobay who is expected shortly to develop a questionnaire which can be used with the Ilois here not only to ascertain their precise number but also to determine their preference with respect to future residence. It seems likely that many will prefer to remain here. Carter noted that MMM leader Berenger and UDM politician Ollivry are calling on him on October 28, presumably to discuss the "humanitarian" issue which they raised earlier (Port Louis 977). Carter expects Ollivry, an astute lawyer, to raise the embarrassing question of citizenship. If he does, Carter will confirm</p>			
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that the non-Seychellois Ilois probably are dual nationals of Mauritius and the UK. If his callers then ask why HMG does not permit those who wish to do so to emigrate to Great Britain, Carter will endeavor to discourage this line on the ground that others of similar limited background and experience in the past have had great difficulty in adjusting to British conditions and not infrequently have asked to leave.

Carter informed the Ambassador on November 1 that his meeting with Berenger and Ollivry had generally followed the script. He indicated that HMG accepts the responsibility for assistance in resettlement of the Mauritian Ilois but that plans to this effect must be developed in collaboration with the GOM. Carter commented that the two main problems are: (a) whether to pay compensation to individual Ilois or place funds at the disposal of the GOM for their integration into the economy; and (b) whether those Mauritian Ilois now here will in most cases wish to remain or be transported to Agalega. The report of Carter's conversation with Berenger/Ollivry appearing in the Star October 29 stated that "the British High Commissioner recognized the responsibility of his Government with respect to the inhabitants of Diego Garcia expelled as the result of the transfer of their native island to Great Britain by this Government in 1965."

Comment: It seems now generally accepted that the USG has no significant responsibility on the Ilois issue. Coincidentally, we have had a good press here as the result of the arrival on October 29 of the first C-130 from Diego to transport Mauritian produce and retail items there. Both the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Ringadoo noted the aircraft at Flaissance during the reception for Ringadoo on his return from the United States (see our A-204). A routine press release issued by the Embassy (see enclosure), stressing the economic benefit to Mauritius of such purchases, was featured in several papers and carried on the Government-controlled MBC radio news. We believe the net effect was a timely demonstration of general USG interest in assisting Mauritius as a result of the installation of our Diego communications facility.

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Enclosure:

Press Release, 10/29/71

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