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OUR REF: BIOT/157/189

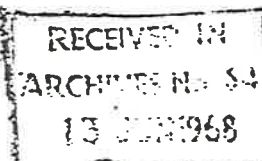
SAVING DESPATCH

FROM : COMMISSIONER BRITISH INDIAN OCEAN TERRITORY

TO : SECRETARY OF STATE FOR COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

DATE : 4th June, 1968.

NO. : BIOT/SD/24



Population of Chagos

I enclose a copy of tables analysing the population figures for Chagos based on a survey carried out in March this year. A brief note setting out the method of compilation and defining the terms used is also attached.

2. The figures represent the position in March, 1968. Whilst the number of male labourers is kept fairly constant, the persons employed change with each visit of a vessel leading to a consequent change in the number of women and children. This is true not only of the Seychellois and Mauritians but also of the Ilois. There are a number of Ilois at present in Mauritius but no figures are available.

3. The following table shows the number of Ilois recorded in Chagos since the formation of BIOT. The figures are, however, not strictly comparable as on the first two visits persons were classified on the subjective basis of what category individuals considered themselves as belonging to, whilst in March, 1968 the objective basis of place of birth and parentage was used.

TOTAL ILOIS

Date	Diego Garcia	Peros Banhos	Salomon	Total
Nov. '66.	166	247	150	563
May, '67.	166	181	140	487
Mar. '68.	128	173	138	439

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4. The definition used for Ilois (i.e. persons born in Chagos or Mauritius whose father, or in the case of illegitimate children whose mother, was born in Chagos) means that all those shown under this heading are at least second generation Ilois, and that 354 of these are at least third generation Ilois. No attempt has been made to go further back but the figures show 434 persons whose roots are firmly established in Chagos and who would not normally be thought of as temporary inhabitants. To this must be added an unknown number of people at present living in Mauritius who are also of Ilois origin.

5. If we are to maintain that there are no permanent inhabitants, it is therefore apparent that we shall have to find some other basis than birth to support our claim. As I have said many of the Ilois have maintained a connection with Mauritius and each visit of a Mauritian vessel in the past has seen a number of Ilois returning after a holiday in Mauritius and others departing. The length of their absence varies but we cannot on this basis alone deny their more than temporary connection with the islands.

6. We must now turn to the question of the status of the Ilois on the islands and it is here that we can find some justification for denying them the status of permanent inhabitants. As far as we are aware the islands have been either leased or in private occupation ever since they were inhabited and the inhabitants have been on the island only because they were employed by the owners or lessees or were members of the family of persons so employed. None of the inhabitants owns any land on the islands and the houses in which they live are the property of the owners. Neither do they have the permanent right to use any land on the islands. The position therefore seems to be that the owners or lessees of the islands have a legal right to remove any person from any of the Chagos islands provided that in doing so they do not break the terms of that person's contract (e.g. right to notice or payment in lieu) and equally that they have the right to refuse to allow any person to return to the islands. The fact that the

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islands are owned by the Crown and either leased or managed on behalf of the Crown does not change this position and we may therefore contend that as no one has any right to reside permanently on the islands there can be no permanent inhabitants.

7. It seems to be accepted by the labourers that the owners have the right to transfer them to other islands and that, if their work or conduct is unsatisfactory, they may be dismissed and returned to Mauritius. Such cases do occur although they are not numerous. On the other hand we had in February the case of 70 Ilois in Mauritius apparently claiming the right to return to work in Chagos and being supported in this by the Mauritius Immigration and Labour authorities (my Telegram No. BIOT 16 of 1st March, 1968). Therefore, if we do have to remove Ilois from the islands we shall have to expect some opposition from the people themselves and possibly from the Mauritius Government. When making resettlement plans we can attempt to overcome the first problem by making the transfer advantageous to those moved (e.g. by providing better accommodation) and we shall have to attempt to forestall any objections by the Mauritius Government by securing their admission that the Ilois are Mauritian e.g. by requiring passports or certificates of identity and nationality, and the possession of a pass under our immigration regulations. My saving despatch BIOT/23 of 3rd June, 1968 dealt with the question of resettlement, and I shall be addressing you shortly on the question of immigration.

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8. I hope that these figures and my comments will be of use to you in considering the presentation of the B.I.O.T. in the United Nations and elsewhere.

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POPULATION OF CHAGOS

The figures were compiled by interviewing each family and obtaining the following information about each member of the family -:

- i. Name;
- ii. Sex;
- iii. Age - over 14 or under 14;
- iv. Place of Birth;
- v. Place of Birth of Parents;
- vi. Marital Status.

In cases where there could be doubt about a person's nationality further details of their origin were sought.

2. For the purpose of this survey 'family' was defined as a group of persons related by blood or by de-facto marriage who ordinarily reside and eat together. De facto marriage includes de jure marriages and simple cohabitation (living en menage).

3. Those aged 14 or over have been classified as adults and those under 14 as children. Fourteen years was chosen as this is the age at which persons may be employed and thus has more significance in this case than the more conventional differentiating ages between adults and children.

4. The population has been divided into the following nationalities:-

1. Seychellois

Persons born in Seychelles or born in Chagos by whose father, or in the case of illegitimate children, whose mother was born in Seychelles.

II. Mauritians

Persons born in Mauritius or born in Chagos whose father, or in the case of illegitimate children whose mother, was born in Mauritius.

III. Ilois

Persons born in Chagos or in Mauritius whose father, or in the case of illegitimate children whose mother, was born in Chagos

Under the terms of the 1968 Mauritian Constitution those classified as Ilois are entitled to Mauritian citizenship.

POPULATION OF CHAGOS - MARCH, 1968.

DIEGO GARCIA :

	<u>ADULTS</u>			<u>CHILDREN</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Seychellois	103	46	149	43	38	81	230
Mauritians	9	6	15	4	3	7	22
Ilois	26	31	57	34	37	71	128
TOTAL	138	83	221	81	78	159	380

	<u>FAMILIES</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>
	Married	Unmarried	
Seychellois	16	36*	52
Mauritians	4	3	7
Ilois	3	18	21
TOTAL	23	57	80

Includes 10 Seychellois living en manage with Iloise.

PEROS BANHOS :

	<u>ADULTS</u>			<u>CHILDREN</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Seychellois	31	8	39	15	11	26	65
Mauritians	5	4	9	2	-	2	11
Ilois	41	43	84	36	48	84	168
TOTAL	77	55	132	53	59	112	244

	<u>FAMILIES</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>
	Married	Unmarried	
Seychelles	6*	9+	15
Mauritians	2	2	4
Ilois	8	19	27
TOTAL	16	30	46

* Includes 2 Seychellois with Ilois wives

+ Includes 4 Seychellois living en monage with Iloise

SALOMON :

	<u>ADULTS</u>			<u>CHILDREN</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Seychellois	22	-	22	-	-	-	22
Mauritians	8	5	13	3	7	10	23
Ilois	37	28	65	43	30	73	138
TOTAL	67	33	100	46	37	83	183

	<u>FAMILIES</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>
	Married	Unmarried	
Seychellois	-	-	-
Mauritians	1	2	3
Ilois	14	15	29
TOTAL	15	17	32

TOTAL CHAGOS :

	<u>ADULTS</u>			<u>CHILDREN</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Seychellois	156	54	210	58	49	107	317
Mauritians	22	15	37	9	10	19	56
Ilois	104	102	206	113	115	228	434
TOTAL	282	171	453	180	174	354	807

FAMILIES

	Married	Unmarried	TOTAL
Seychellois	22*	45+	67
Mauritians	7	7	14
Ilois	25	52	77
TOTAL	54	104	158

* Includes 2 Seychellois with Ilois wives

+ Includes 14 Seychellois living en menage with Iloise.