

An Account of Diego Garcia and its People

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1. Discovery and settlement of Diego Garcia

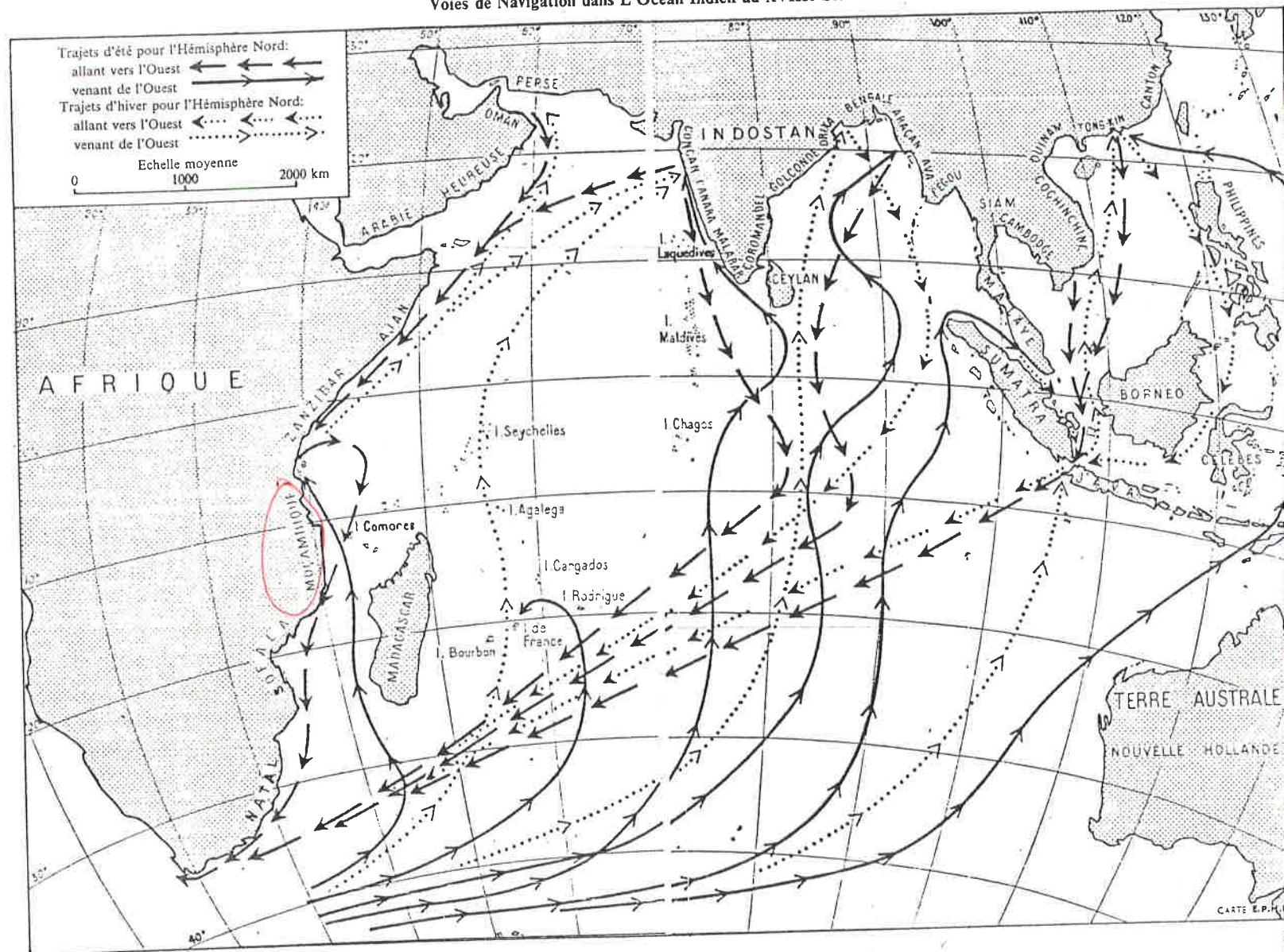
Arab and Indian sailors travelling across the Indian Ocean probably used to pause in the middle of the Indian Ocean to refresh themselves in the spacious bay of Diego Garcia. The first European sailor who discovered Diego Garcia is believed to be Pedro Mascarenhas who in 1532 travelled across the Indian Ocean to India. During that voyage, he discovered Peros Banhos and the Chagos Archipelago and probably stopped to refit at Diego Garcia, which he named after the Portuguese Admiral, Don Garcia de Noronha¹.

Although the strategic position of those atolls was appreciated by early navigators in the Ocean, no attempt was made at their settlement. It was only during the eighteenth century, while Ile de France was being developed as an important naval base for the expansion of French imperialism in India, that an attempt for the settlement of Diego Garcia was made.

The Chagos Archipelago lies midway between Mauritius, and India. It covers an area extending from about $7^{\circ}39'$ to $4^{\circ}41'$ latitude South and from $70^{\circ}50'$ to $72^{\circ}41'$ longitude East. It is approximately 1,175 miles or 2,150 kms distant from Mauritius. The distance between the largest of its islands, Diego Garcia in the South of the Archipelago and the most northerly island in the Peros Banhos group is 125 miles². Diego Garcia is an island of coral formation and covers an area of 230 sq. kms. It is in the form of a horse-shoe enfolding an extensive lagoon which forms a spacious bay. Between the extremities of its arms lie three minor islands named respectively :

(i) North or Bird Island

Voies de Navigation dans L'Océan Indien au XVIIIe Siècle



D'après le Neptune Oriental, 1775 pl.9 et Toussaint, A : La Route des Iles, 1967 pl.7

(ii) Middle Island

(iii) East or Grande Barbe Island

The American naval station is situated in the Western portion of the atoll and the only entrance to the Diego Garcia's spacious bay is situated North, between the North and Middle Island and is roomy enough for the largest vessel to enter. It is about 15 miles in length from end to end and from two to five miles in breadth³.

When Ile de France was retroceded to the Royal Government in 1767, the *Ministère de la Guerre et de la Marine* outlined a new foreign policy for the island as the main objective of the Royal Government was the re-establishment of French supremacy in India. Ile de France was to serve as the "point d'appui" for French expeditionary forces. In that context a new shorter route to India needed to be chartered. In 1768, Chevalier Grenier was appointed to fulfill that mission, he was accompanied by Abbé de Rochon, a famous astronomer to the navy. Their mission was to survey the seas north of the Ile de France. During that survey, Grenier and Rochon established correctly the position of Diego Garcia and chartered a new route which shortened the voyage to India by 800 leagues. It was during those hydrological surveys that the French government appreciated the value of the strategic position of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. During the following year, La Fontaine was sent again to Diego Garcia to make a survey of the island. He reported that a great number of vessels might anchor safely in the spacious bay. Following that report the government encouraged the settlement of Diego Garcia⁴ (See map on opposite page).

The first settler on Diego Garcia was Pierre Marie Le Normand, an eminent personality of Ile de France who possessed an important plantation at Le Morne in the district of Rivière Noire. He owned many slaves and noticed with great sorrow that the number of lepers among the slave population of Ile de France was growing at a fast rate.

In 1783, he presented to the Governor, Vicomte de Souillac, a petition requesting the permission to create a settlement on Diego Garcia. He offered to develop a coconut plantation on the land concession he would be granted and proposed to repay



the taxes owed to the government with the coconut oil he would produce. He received a favourable reply in February 1783 and immediately prepared his voyage to Diego Garcia. He was accompanied by twenty-two slaves who helped him to set up his coconut plantations. The salubrious climate of Diego Garcia gave to Mr Le Normand the idea that part of the island could be converted into a leprosy which would receive the lepers from Mauritius. He believed that the quality of food available on the island could be the right diet for persons suffering from the disease and that the salubrious climate would lead to their quick recovery. Mr Le Normand believed that a diet composed of turtle soup, fish and coconut would purge the blood of lepers from all impurities; a prerequisite condition that would bring about a quick regression of the infection⁵.

The government accepted the propositions of Mr Le Normand and encouraged him to set up his leprosy in Diego Garcia with the object of using it as a quarantine station for lepers of Ile-de-France. Further, to discourage early settlers from converting Diego Garcia into an illegal depôt for the convenience of slavers operating in the Indian Ocean, the government gave them special encouragement for the creation of fisheries and the cultivation of coconut trees and cotton plants so that the island may become self-sufficient. Nature had so generously endowed the island that the first settlers, without great difficulty, quickly converted the island into valuable possessions. By that time three landholders were active on the island, they were Lapotaire, Cayeux and Didier. Mr Lapotaire was the most successful and by 1794 was producing coconut oil for exportation⁶.

When Mauritius passed under the British government, the holders of concessions on Diego Garcia were confirmed in their holdings and the government made special efforts to encourage the production of coconut oil with the object of making the "oil islands" the principal suppliers of Mauritius in that commodity of prime necessity. By the middle of the nineteenth century, three oil estates had developed on Diego Garcia. They were :

- (i) Mini Mini - on the North East side.
- (ii) Pointe de l'Est - on the East.

(iii) Pointe Marianne - on the West.

During the year 1863-64 Diego Garcia alone produced 71,000 vells of oil, half the consumption of Mauritius⁷.

The number of settlers on the island also progressively increased and was numbered at about 200 by the turn of the century. The life of the settlers on the island was agreeable although the population lacked material comfort. The houses were built from the material produced by the lush vegetation of the island. They looked lower and darker because they were dominated by the vegetable richness of their background. The estate managers supplied weekly to the labourers about 12 lbs of rice. Labourers supplied their diet easily with the fish which was in abundance, the fowls and ducks which they reared in quantity, the coconut which was at hand and some vegetables.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, steamships gradually began to replace sailing vessels and steamship companies which had monopolised the carrying trade in the Indian Ocean were early to recognise the convenient geographical position of Diego Garcia in the middle of the ocean. Taking advantage of the spacious bay which afforded berth to the largest steamship of the time, the Orient Steam Navigation Company obtained from the Mauritian government permission to build a coaling station near Grande Barbe to be used solely for the accommodation of their magnificent vessels which passed on their way to and from England and Australia. Shortly after, another steamship company, the Lund Company petitioned for the concession of another position on the coast to be converted into a second coaling station for the ships of their company. Thus the activities of coaling stations provided additional work to the inhabitants living on the island. The improvement which those Companies brought on the island raised the standard of living of the islanders. The islanders benefited from the water filtering and aerating apparatus which the coaling company installed on the island to furnish fresh water to their ships⁸.

During the first half of the century, coconut plantations on Diego Garcia steadily increased and modern technic was

introduced on the plantations; for example tractors were used to clear the land. Between the years 1955-57, production on Diego Garcia increased at an average of seventy-five tons of copra a year and the export of coconut for the same period reached hundred thousands of coconuts. Another natural product of Diego Garcia which was at that period profitably exploited was the guano deposit. In 1957 one third of the total value of export from Diego Garcia was represented by guano shipment. Dry fish industry also represented a notable percentage of the export economy of Diego Garcia. The communication between Mauritius and Diego Garcia was assured by the famous *Sir Jules* vessel whose voyages inspired Jacques Cantin to produce his famous popular song.

In the luxuriant vegetation of Diego Garcia, the people bred and increased normally. Neither the birth rate nor the death rate showed a great difference with that recorded in Mauritius. On the whole the inhabitants were happy with their fate although life was characterised by a certain indolence. Their spiritual need was looked after by the Bishop of Port Louis who regularly sent missionaries on visit to the island. The result was that 90 per cent of the people of Diego Garcia were Roman Catholics. However unforeseen events in the Indian Ocean were soon to disturb the quiet life of Diego Garcians.

II. Changing strategic area in the Indian Ocean during the Twentieth Century

The Indian Ocean covers a vast expanse of some 17,000,000 square miles. Entrance into the ocean is however restricted to four gateways: the narrow Suez - Red Sea passage which leads to the Mediterranean, the island gaps between the Malay peninsula and Australia which afford passage to the Pacific, the open entrance round the Cape that leads to the Atlantic and the wide expanse South of Australia that opens upon the Antarctic. Because of its vastness, none of the surrounding countries has controlled the ocean's well defined ship ways. It was command

of the Atlantic in the eighteenth century that gave Britain the means to dominate the Indian ocean politically as well as strategically during the nineteenth century. Starting from Bengal, the richest province of India, Britain gradually built round that centre a peripheral set of interests in the Mascarenes, East Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia. To control that complex web of assets and commitments, Britain had to assume control of the ship ways into the Ocean.

The advent of modern technology at the dawn of the twentieth century has shifted the area of strategic importance from India to the Middle East: a convenient term that covers the oil producing countries i.e. Iran, Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, Israel, Jordan, the United Arab Republic and Sudan. Together these countries produce 62 per cent of the world's total oil production. Western Europe imports half of its total oil consumption and Japan 63 per cent from the Middle East.

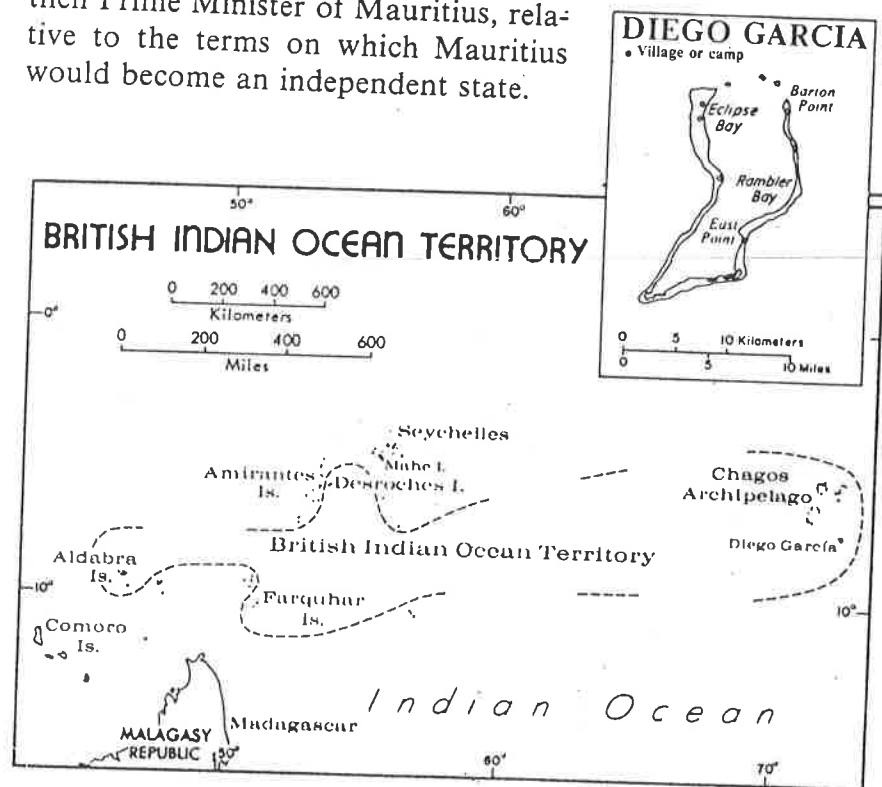
The first war for oil happened during the First World War (1914-1918) when military activities in the Indian Ocean were localized in the Middle East and East Africa. The political consequence of the emergence of the Middle East countries was the awakening of Asian countries which first supported Turkey in her conflict with European powers, then fought for their own liberation from the colonial yoke.

During World War II, the nationalist movement in Asian countries gained momentum and the aspirations of colonised nations were fulfilled when Britain started the "decolonization" process with the recognition of India as a nation state.

The post war era radically changed United Kingdom's position in the Indian Ocean. Having recognised the independence of her colonial possessions in the region, Britain lost primarily the chief motive to act as guardian of the ocean ways and secondly the legal status of sovereignty from which she used to act during her interventions. The loss of colonies has equally deprived the United Kingdom of her chief naval bases from which she used to control air and naval communications East of Suez. Accordingly, in 1958 when Singapore acceded to independence, Britain transferred her control communication

base to Mauritius, which was however scheduled to become an independent state ten years later.

In anticipation of the event, the British government issued the Royal Instructions dated 8th November, 1965, which provided for the creation of the British Indian Ocean Territory with the design of preserving for Britain a permanent strategic position in the heart of the ocean. The administration of the new territory was entrusted to the British High Commissioner, Sir Hugh Norman-Walker, Governor of Seychelles⁹. The islands which initially constituted the British Indian Ocean Territory were the Chagos Archipelago, the Aldabra, Desroches and Farquhar Islands. The cession to Britain of the Chagos, considered a territorial possession of Mauritius, was agreed upon during the negotiations that were carried on between the British Government and Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam then Prime Minister of Mauritius, relative to the terms on which Mauritius would become an independent state.



Stoddard, T.: Area Handbook for Indian Ocean Territories, 1971 - p. 50.

Meanwhile the situation in the Middle East was deteriorating. Egyptian and Israeli armies were shooting at each other across the Suez Canal, a conflict that was gradually to involve all the Middle East countries. During the Arab-Israeli war that followed, two major powers moved in to provide military support on each side of the Suez Canal; the U.S.S.R. and the United States, for British influence in the region waned when Britain left Egypt in 1954. The closure of the Suez Canal to navigation in June 1967 precipitated events. Western Europe's economy including that of Britain could not normally function for more than sixty days without Persian Gulf oil, and the closure of the Canal lengthened the oil route to European ports by some 4,000 nautical miles. The U.S.S.R. was equally affected by the closure of the canal, for deprived of the Mediterranean-Black Sea outlet, the transport of tropical products by sea was lengthened by another several thousand miles. In that situation it became imperative for the U.S.S.R. either to obtain an outlet on the shores of the Indian Ocean, or to secure refueling and repair facilities in some Indian Ocean ports. It also became important for the U.S.S.R. to protect her merchant navy operating in the ocean by some military and naval support.

Soviet naval activity in the Indian Ocean was received in the West with growing apprehension and concern and as Moscow enlarged her network of facilities in a number of strategically located ports, Great Britain thought it wise to ensure that her economic interest in countries bounding the ocean be protected by a military presence, however modest it may be. Earlier on the 30th December 1966, Great Britain had signed an agreement with the United States "concerning the availability of the British Indian Ocean Territory for defence purposes" for on strategic level, Britain had been forced to recognize American naval superiority since World War II¹⁰.

While the penetration of the U.S.S.R. navy into the Indian Ocean became disquieting, Mauritius celebrated her independence on 12th March 1968 and accordingly Britain had to move out her naval communication base and reinforce the naval base at Simonstown which guards the Cape route into the

Atlantic. The development of that naval base intensified threats from surrounding pro-communist countries. At that stage, the South African government pointed out that South Africa would no longer make herself a target for attack because of her defence of the Cape route unless the West was prepared to help in the protection of her harbours and industries¹¹.

The new line in foreign policy adopted by independent Mauritius, some time later seemed to add weight to the argument. In 1970 the Prime Minister of Mauritius signed an agreement with the U.S.S.R. allowing to Soviet trawlers harbour facilities in Port Louis and permission to use Plaisance Airport for the movement of ship personnel. This agreement was interpreted by a number of Western observers as an enlargement of Soviet involvement in the affairs of the Indian Ocean in as much as Soviet political activity in countries on the periphery of the Indian Ocean were accompanied by extensive "hydrographic, oceanographic, and maritime activities". Furthermore at that period Moscow had succeeded to establish a link road from Soviet Central Asia via Afghanistan to the sea coast of the Indian Ocean by obtaining permission to use the port of Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf. It was feared that in a foreseeable future the U.S.S.R. would succeed to build her military and naval potential in the Indian Ocean to such an extent that it would become a serious military threat to Great Britain and allies, whose navy plies the Indian Ocean.¹²

Up to the present time, the Indian Ocean has retained its historical role as an arena for external trade of European countries and the nation with the greatest commercial stake remains the United Kingdom which continues to draw its most vital industrial and agricultural raw material from the area. It is also estimated that 20 per cent of the world's maritime activity is conducted across that sea transporting Europe's vital commodities such as oil, copper, tin, rubber and grains.

Accordingly following the 1967 agreement with Washington "concerning the availability of the British Indian Ocean Territory for defence purposes" the United States began in 1972 to construct a \$19 million naval communication and air support

facility on "Diego Garcia to track space and surface ships, to provide navigational aids to United States and friendly surface vessels and submarines, and to listen for unidentified naval movements in the central Indian Ocean"¹³.

As the threat of military conflict in the Indian Ocean became more precise, Indian Ocean states which have common interests and common approaches to the ocean's shores became concerned. Their main objective was to keep the Indian Ocean an open sea without threats to their access routes. The country which took the lead in that new approach was Ceylon, a small island state, strategically located in the Indian Ocean and possessing the finest harbour of the ocean - Trincomalee. Ceylon with a more acute oceanic consciousness introduced the concept of Indian Ocean "as a zone of peace" at the Lusaka Conference in 1971. She explained that "our concept of a peace zone totally excludes the intrusion of great power conflicts into the region with their attendant defence system".¹⁴ The general opposition to foreign bases was equally voiced by the newly independent Seychelles state. When the Seychelles obtained independence in 1976, the government of Seychelles claimed and obtained from Great Britain the retrocession of Aldabra, Desroches and Farquhar islands as part of the independence settlement and the British Indian Ocean Territory shrunk then to the territorial limits covered by the Chagos Archipelago. The administration of the territory then passed under the responsibility of the Foreign Commonwealth Office in London.

However for the great powers the concept of Indian Ocean as a peace zone is closely connected with the assurance of freedom of the seas which may be guaranteed mainly through the maintenance of a balance of power. Accordingly a new agreement was signed between Great Britain and the United States of America in 1976 which includes provisions "to develop the present limited naval communication facility on Diego Garcia as a support facility of United States navy"¹⁵. The facility was to consist of an anchorage, air field support elements, personnel accommodation, transmitting and receiving services. The purpose of building such a facility was to provide an

improved link in United States defence communication and furnish support for ships and aircrafts owned or operated by or on behalf of either the government of the United States or Great Britain¹⁶.

At present, pertinent information on the naval facility that it is being built on Diego Garcia is regarded as "inaccessible" and "secret". For the common people, it is but a demonstration of political intent rather than an effective military instrument but like the iceberg which shows only the tip of its summit, the facility base at Diego Garcia is meaningful in the measure of the military deterrent behind it, that is, the Polaris/Poseidon strike force, the nuclear-powered missile carrying submarines and anti-nuclear submarine strike capability of both the United States and Soviet Union¹⁷.

3. Diego Garcians, a pawn on the political Chess-board

The fifth Constitutional Conference that took place during the month of September 1965, involved secret negotiations concerning the cession of the Chagos Archipelago to Great Britain before the granting of independence to Mauritius. It later became clear that the secret agreement included a clause providing for the compulsory removal of the civil population of the Chagos to Mauritius. As compensation for the excision of the territory, the government of Mauritius accepted a sum of Rs40. million to be used for the rehabilitation of the displaced population which then amounted to some 1,200 persons and for the financing of developing projects.

After the proclamation of the Royal Instructions of the 8th November 1965, by which the British Indian Ocean Territory came into being, Diego Garcians were invited to leave the Archipelago for Mauritius. But Diego Garcians who were born fishermen ignored the invitation and preferred to remain on their island home. A few families however moved to Isle du Coin and Boddam Islands, and some tried to settle in Mauritius.

The agreements which Britain subsequently signed with the

United States of America concerning the availability of the British Indian Ocean Territory for naval communication facility necessitated the departure of the civilian population from the area. Accordingly, the British government began to apply pressure on the civilian population remaining on the British Indian Ocean Territory and requested the acceleration of their departure for Mauritius. The movement out of the island was however progressive and it took the government of Mauritius nearly eight years (1965-1973) to complete the repatriation of all the "ilois". Compulsory removal from the native country was however but the first bead of a long string of misfortunes that awaited Diego Garcians on the soil of Mauritius.

First of all, the Mauritian government was slow in distributing to the "ilois" the indemnity paid by the British government for rehabilitation purposes. The plight of the "ilois" awakened the sympathy of the Mauritian population. Protests were voiced in the local newspapers and in 1976, Russell Prosper, Counsel on social questions, acting on behalf of the British government, produced a report on the situation of the "ilois" in Mauritius. He obtained the payment of an indemnity amounting to Rs 7,390. for each displaced person¹⁸.

It was suggested that the best way to help Diego Garcians was to create living quarters where "ilois" would be lodged in groups, but the Diego Garcians, preferred their liberty of movement and opted for an allocation of money which they obtained in 1978. The high cost of living in Mauritius reduced to nil the amount they obtained in a short time, and they soon again constituted a problem for the Mauritian government.

World wide opinion on the plight of the "ilois" had however been roused earlier when the question of the defence of the Indian Ocean was debated at the Congress in Washington in September 1975. The American Government had declared that Diego Garcia was uninhabited but had failed to add that the autochthones had been previously transferred to Mauritius¹⁹. The statement was construed by political parties opposed to the presence of Americans in the Indian Ocean as an intent of deceit and the case of Diego Garcians became intimately linked with

the militarisation of the Indian Ocean.

In Mauritius, Mr. Gaetan Duval, leader of the P.M.S.D. (Parti Mauricien Social Democrate) took up the defence of the "ilois" through the case of Michel Venkatessen, a displaced native of Diego Garcia, who had entered a lawsuit against the British government, claiming compensation for the moral and financial damages as a result of his forced emigration from Diego Garcia²⁰

As a result of that intervention, Mr Sheridan who claimed to act on behalf of the Committee representing the interest of the Diego Garcians, arrived in Mauritius on the 7th November 1979, and offered to obtain from the British government, on the behalf of Diego Garcians, a compensation of Rs 20 million in return for their renunciation of their right to return to Diego Garcia. He called an assembly of all the "ilois" at the *Centre Social de Marie Reine de la Paix* and asked each of them to sign the agreement. But the publicity given to Mr Sheridan's mission, forced the M.M.M. (Mouvement Militant Mauricien) to intervene in the person of Mr K. Bhayat, Vice President of the M.M.M. He stopped the "ilois" from giving to Mr Sheridan the power of attorney affording him the power to negotiate with the British government on their behalf²¹.

As a result of Mr Bhayat's intervention, the "ilois" constituted their own committees for the defence of their rights. These committees came under the leadership of "Organisation Fraternelle" and M.M.M. members. As a first move they decided to take legal steps in order to obtain the revocation of the conditions attached to the distribution of a new compensation namely the renunciation of the right of Diego Garcians to return to their native land.

The incident caused by the offer of Sheridan to the "Ilois" obtained world wide coverage. Non-aligned countries took advantage of the incident to voice their protests on the installation of an Anglo-American facility base on Diego Garcia. Matters came to a head when Russian armies overran Afghanistan in the early month of January 1980. It was a direct threat to the peace of countries bordering the Indian Ocean including that of Mauritius, for from Afghanistan the road was

open for U.S.S.R. military forces to gain access into the Indian Ocean. President Carter immediately announced a series of measures, economic as well as military against U.S.S.R. namely: the blockage of the supply of cereals and interruption in supply of sophisticated military gadgets. The cold war declared between the United States and the U.S.S.R. escalated when Washington proposed a military alliance with Pekin.

Arab countries bordering the Indian Ocean, namely Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran were also alarmed by the advance of U.S.S.R. armies towards the ocean ways. India equally voiced protests against the threats on her borders, as American powerful airforce began their survey missions of the area. As a result of United States direct involvement in the waters of the ocean, the base of Diego Garcia had to be ready to support the American naval and air forces²².

In order to bring to a fast conclusion the question of Diego Garcia, the British Government announced at the end of January that it was ready to offer an additional compensation to the amount of Rs 22 million that is about Rs 18,000 per displaced person in return for Diego Garcians' renunciation of their rights to return to Diego Garcia.

Since Diego Garcia had by that time become an important element of the British American military strategy in the Indian Ocean, Jean Claude de l'Estrac, spokesman of the M.M.M., thought it convenient to use the "ilois" question as a platform for the party's political offensive. It was calculated that the M.M.M. would earn world wide recognition if it took a clear stand on the question of the demilitarisation of the ocean.

To limit the ground thus won by the M.M.M., the labour Party adopted a similar policy and Sir V. Ringadoo took the lead of the committee formed to obtain the adhesion of world nations bordering the ocean to the efforts of maintaining the Indian Ocean as a peaceful zone. However the action of the Labour Party was hindered by the fact that it had ceded Diego Garcia to the British government. Accordingly Sir V. Ringadoo promised to the members of the Labour Agents Association, that the government would call for the retrocession of Diego Garcia to Mauritius.²³

The problem was discussed during the annual meeting of Commonwealth leaders and the result was a visit of Mr R. Luce, Under-Secretary of State, in May 1980. Officially Mr Luce arrived to review the financing of different development projects in Mauritius but he was to take advantage of his visit to have the view of political leaders of the island on the problems of Diego Garcia. Accordingly the committee for the defence of the "ilois" took the opportunity to present to Mr Luce a petition in which Diego Garcians explained their sad situation in Mauritius and their desire to return to Diego Garcia. Mr Luce was then forced to explain to the population the attitude of the British government on Diego Garcia and to give the assurance that the military arsenal built on Diego Garcia, was for the purpose of defending the freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean. In the same breadth he announced that his government would examine with sympathy the plight of the Diego Garcians. The feminine element in the march of protest organised by the *Comité de Soutien aux Ilois* was predominant, it was the beginning of the involvement of women in the struggle of the "ilois" for recognition of their rights.

As negotiations lingered and no agreement was reached, it was decided that a Mauritian delegation would go to London to negotiate directly with the British government. The delegation was composed of Mr. Purryag, Minister of Social Security, members representing the "ilois" were Mr. J. Burty David, President of the Laour Party, Mr. Paul Cheong Lon, Minister of Justice and Mr. P. Bérenger, leader of the M.M.M. The compensation proposed by the delegation amounted to Rs 158. million but the British government was adamant. Its offer was Rs 26. million coupled with the same condition that the "ilois" should renounce their rights to return to Diego Garcia²⁴.

On opening the debate, Mr Purryag declared that he wished that the British and Mauritian governments would solve the problem "once and for all, in a spirit of conciliation, fair play, justice and in the interest of those unfortunate "ilois" who need to be adequately compensated"²⁵. The negotiations sadly failed. The firm stand taken by Great Britain leaves little hope that the

Mauritian government would ever obtain the retrocession of Diego Garcia.

The question of compensation for the people of Diego Garcia was finally settled in August 1982 by the M.M.M./P.S.M. (Parti Socialiste Mauricien) government. Each adult "ilois" born at Diego Garcia received a compensation of Rs 46,000. and each child half that amount. The "Ilois Trust Fund" was then created to manage the compensation money on behalf of the Ilois population. The main task assigned to the Ilois Trust Fund was the settlement of the displaced population. The Central Housing Authority provided relatively cheap lodging and the Development Bank of Mauritius provided expert guidance for the creation of small scale industries. At present, the problem of the Diego Garcians seems mainly to be a human problem which the government of Mauritius is inclined to examine with sympathy by making available to them all the social benefits to which the people of Mauritius is entitled. It is hoped that with time Diego Garcians would become Mauritians "à part entière" when they would exercise their civil rights.

However, it is heartening to note that the material comfort which Mauritius affords, has not erased in the heart of Diego Garcians the "culture des îles". Diego Garcians have shown their determination to preserve their identity by creating their own musical and theatre group and by popularising their eating habits and by propagating their songs, beliefs and legends. The danger is that, in the future, political organisations may again use Diego Garcians as a pawn. Already there are indications that a pro-communist party has launched the concept of Diego Garcia as a sovereign state, on the theory that Diego Garcians were denied their fundamental right to decide freely their own political status²⁶.

Notes

1. Scott, Robert : *Limuria, the lesser dependencies of Mauritius*. London, Oxford University Press, 1961. p. 34

1. Ly-Tio-Fane, M. : Indian Ocean Islands - naturally. Some account of their natural history as depicted in the literature. *Proc. 2nd International Conference Indian Ocean Studies*. Perth, Western Australia, 5-12 December 1984. Section F : Resources for research, and Section A : Resources, Environment and Economic Development. The scientific work conducted in the Indian Ocean South of the Equator and within the Tropic of Capricorn since the eighteenth century is reviewed. The natural features and resources of the small isolated islands are discussed, as are the impact of the agricultural explosion of the nineteenth century and the effect of the exploitation of phosphatic fertilizer on the native biota. Conservation policies are outlined.
2. Scott, R.: op. cit. p. 5.
3. Dupont, I. : Report on Diego Garcia by Inspector of Police, Sheppard, 1884.
4. Scott, R. : op. cit. p. 68
5. Nagapen, A. : *Moulin à Poudre*. Published by the Diocese de Port Louis, 1980.
6. Mauritius Archives : RA/1 24
7. Dupont, I. : op. cit.
8. Dupont I. : op. cit.
9. The British Indian Ocean Territory Order Royal Instructions 1965, dated 8 November 1965, Statutory Instruments, 1965 no. 1920. London, H.M.S.O. London 1965.
10. Treaty Series No. 15 (1967) Cmnd 3231
11. South Africa Department of Information. *South Africa in World Strategy*, Pretoria Dept. of Information, 1968.
12. Soviet Policies South and East of Suez. *Foreign Affairs*, October 1970.
13. Treaty Series No. 126 (1972) Cmnd 5160
14. *Ceylon Daily News*, 22 January 1971
15. The British Indian Ocean Territory Order 1976 dated June 1976. Statutory Instruments, 1976, No. 893. London H.M.S.O. Publication, 1976.
16. See annexed document.
17. Leymaire, Ph : Les grandes manoeuvres dans l'Océan Indien. *Le monde diplomatique*, Décembre 1976.
18. Posser, R. : Resettlement of persons transferred from the Chagos Archipelago, Sept. 1976, Government Printing. 1976.
19. Oraison, A. : Les avatars du British Indian Ocean Territory.

- Annuaire des pays de l'Océan Indien*, 1979, p. 177-209.
20. *Le Mauricien*, 7 and 8 November 1979
 21. *Le Mauricien*, 8 November 1979
 22. *Le Mauricien*, 22 January 1980
 23. *Le Mauricien*, 8 February 1980
 24. *Le Mauricien*, 3 July 1981
 25. *Le Mauricien*, 3 July 1981
 26. O.N.U. Resolution 1514 of the 14th December 1980. Tous les peuples ont droit de libre détermination. En vertu de ce droit ils déterminent librement leur statut politique, et poursuivent librement leur développement économique, social et culturel.

Document I

Exchange of notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America concerning a United States Navy support facility on Diego Garcia, British Indian Ocean territory
No. 1

*Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of the United States of America*

Note No. DPP 063/530/2

*Foreign and Commonwealth Office,
London.
25 February, 1976.*

Sir,

I have the honour to refer to the Agreement constituted by the Exchange of Notes dated 30 December 1966 between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America concerning the availability of the British Indian Ocean Territory for defence purposes¹ and to the Agreement constituted by the Exchange of Notes dated 24 October 1972 between the two Governments