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ENCLOSURE TO MAURITIUS DESPATCH No. 9 OF 4.1.40

Report of Mr. Magistrate M. Rousset on the
Chagos Group.

- Departure. 1.- In compliance with instructions received from the Hon. Procureur General, I left Mauritius on 22.5.39 on board S.S. "Zambezia", 879 tons register. A. Nicolin, master, M. Ross, Mate.
- Arrival. 2.- I arrived at Pointe de l'Est, Diego Island, on 29/5, in the early morning.
- Last visit. 3.- Diego Island had been last visited by Mr. Magistrate M. Lavoipierre in October, 1938.
- Manager. 4.- Mr. Lois Dumee. Assistant Mr. Charoux.
- Population. 5.- On my arrival the population consisted of 157 men, 177 women, 82 boys and 74 girls.
- Civil status. 6.- The Civil Status registers examined by me showed that from October 1938 to June 1939, 10 births have been registered.
- Deaths. 7.- 12 deaths have been registered during the same period.
- Still births. 8.- Two still births were registered.
- Marriages 9.- Five marriages have been celebrated since last visit.
- Causes of death. 10.- Causes of death were registered to be: Pneumonia (2); Dysentery (1); Septicaemia (2); Intestinal Haemorrhage (1); Infantile debility (1).
- Remarks. 11.- As a whole I found that the Civil Status registers were kept in a fairly good way. I had to correct or rectify only two acts.

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● Live stock. 12.- As far as could be ascertained at the time of my visit the animals numbered 60 asses, 40 horses, 68 pigs and poultry.

On all the Islands I visited fresh meat is sold to the population at least once a week at about 0.25cs per lb.

Prison. 13.- I visited the prison building which I found clean. Invariably all the buildings on these islands are given a fresh coat of paint in expectation of the Magistrate's arrival.

An enquiry revealed that in all cases prisoners confined in the cells have received treatment as provided by law. I examined the prison register and approved of various sentences of imprisonment inflicted by the Manager. 3 cases of disturbance (quarrel in camp) and one case of insubordination were dealt with and the delinquents were sentenced to undergo short terms of imprisonment ranging from one to six days' imprisonment. I have been satisfied that in no case the Manager abused his powers.

Administration of justice. 14.- I received only one complaint. On the morning of our departure a labourer complained to me that his shed had been broken open and various articles (rice, utensils etc) had been stolen. In spite of close searches made under my own supervision and guidance no satisfactory evidence could be gathered.

The victim of this larceny had come from a camp situate at about 5 miles from the main establishment for purposes of loading the ship. I urged on the

Manager /

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manager the necessity of having a watchman to keep constant watch of uninhabited huts during absence of their occupants at work else such occurrences would be bound to recur. A labourer was suspected of being the author of the larceny; it appeared that he had been dismissed from service some time ago for gross misconduct and had managed to return on the island by some means or other. As the presence of this man on the island was a source of trouble to the manager and to his fellow labourers he was ordered to return to Mauritius.

Hospital

15.- The hospital was clean and well kept and was under the care of a new warder. I visited the hospital daily and paid close attention to the work done by the dispenser whom I found efficient and industrious.

It was a moving sight to see ^{two} ~~how~~ centenarians coming every afternoon to rest in the hospital bed when they are given tea; one of them was suffering from "cataract"; in spite of all persuasive argument and solicitations the old man refused obstinately to come to Mauritius when I tried to convince him that he could successfully be operated upon. He refused, saying that he preferred to die on his island and be buried together with his wife.

Register.

16.- The hospital register was kept up to date and showed that from October 1938 to June 1939, 88 patients were admitted for treatment, the commonest diseases being influenza, ankylostomiasis (amongst adults) dysentery.

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+ Another 437 bags

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Pharmacy

17.- At the time of my visit the value of medicine and drugs in stock was reckoned to be about Rs.400 worth. Another Rs.135 worth were just landed. The surgical and other instruments were in a good state of preservation.

Shop. 18. The shop was abundantly stocked. The value of goods in stock at the date of my arrival amounted to Rs.14,802,90cs to which must be added another Rs. 6,895,06cs worth of other goods just landed. I checked the invoices, the weights and measures which I found correct. I also examined the price list and caused an error to be corrected in the case of retail price of Gold Flake cigarette tins.

Rice. 19.- The stock of rice on my arrival was 536 bags⁺ were received by S.S.Zambezia. The rice was of good quality. The average monthly consumption was given to be 100 bags.

Wages. 20.- The total amount of wages received by the labourers from October 1938 to May 1939 has been Rs.20,500,79 cs.

Extras 21.- The extra sums paid during the same period amounted to Rs.2,579,72cs.

Destruction of rats. 22.- Extras paid for the destruction of rats have been Rs.554.37cs. About 32,000 of these rodents are killed yearly.

Capture of turtles. 23.- The sums paid for the capture of turtles amounted to Rs.126.

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Savings Bank. 24.- The sum of money deposited in the hands of the manager amounted to Rs.2,152,25cs.

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POINTE MARIANNE

25-Diego Island comprises two establishments for purposes of facilitating and dividing the work, the one at Pointe de l'Est being the main establishment, the other being at Pointe Marianne, situate on the other side of the bay, at a distance of about two miles. On my arrival the manager of this establishment received order to go to Peros group and was replaced by Mr. A.Talbot.

About 15 or 20 men are employed and reside on this establishment.

26.- I found the camp in a state of abandonment and the house threatening ruin and an imminent fall. Most of them were supported by poles. I urged on the new manager that such a state of matters should not be allowed to obtain and that the houses should be attended to immediately. I also impressed on the manager the necessity of sending the dispenser of ^{Pointe de l'Est} Diego establishment at least once a week to Pointe Marianne where labourers would consult him.

PART II

Peros Banhos Group.

Arrival. 27.- I left Diego Island on the 2nd of June last and reached Peros on the next day.

The headquarters of this group are on Ile de Coin

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Manager. 28.- Mr.W.Thatcher, Assistant H.Rambert.

Population 29.- On my arrival the population numbered:-
 Males ... 100 Adults ... 73 boys
 Females... 89 Adults ... 78 girls
 3 men, 3 women and 3 children arrived by S.S.Zambezia.

Civil Status -29.- The Civil Status registers examined by me showed
 that from October 1938 to June 1939 -
 Births 13, 1 still birth and 4 deaths were registered.

Cause of death 30- The causes of death were reported to be Bronchitis,
 nutritis and tetanus.

Marriages. 31.- No marriage was celebrated since last visit.

Hospital 32.- I examined the hospital building which I found very
 clean. Some bed sheets were old and torn; the dispenser
 Mr. R.Zelia told me he had ordered a new set.

The surgical instruments were clean and neat. The
 register was kept up to date ^{and showed that from October 1938 to date of} ~~on my visit.~~ 23 persons
 were admitted for treatment. The diseases treated
 including cases of lying-in were abdominal pains,
 wounds of minor character, abscesses, dyspepsia,
 hepatitis, fractures, influenza, lumbago, nutritis and
 rhumatism. The midwife attached to the hospital was
 suffering from tuberculosis and had to go back to
 Mauritius, in the meantime the dispenser's wife is
 performing her duties with even more competency.

Pharmacy. 33.- The pharmacy was well stocked at the date of my
 arrival, the value of drugs etc in stock was about
 Rs.500. Another Rs.84 worth of medicine arrived by
 S.S.Zambezia.

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- Prison 34.- The prison building was clean. Since last visit in October 1938, only one labourer was sentenced to undergo 55 hours imprisonment for plundering coco nuts. I duly signed the prison register and approved of the sentence inflicted.
- Administration of Justice. 35.- I received no complaint during my stay.
- Shop 36.- The shop was fairly well stocked. At my arrival the value of goods in stock was Rs.8,571,62cs. About Rs.3,492,90 worth of goods were just landed. I duly checked the invoices and price list and tested the weights and measures which were found correct.
- Rice 36.- The stock of rice was 273 bags to which was to be added 185 bags just landed. The average monthly consumption was given to be about 48 bags.
- Sales 37.- Rs.9,653,85cs value of goods have been sold from October 1938 to April 1939.
- Camp 38.- I visited the camp which I found in a fairly good state of repair.
- Live stock 39.- As far as could be ascertained the animals on the island were 50 asses, 130 pigs and poultry.
- Wages. 40.- The net total amount of wages paid to the labourers from October 1938 to May 1939 have been Rs.11,078, 15cs. The pay book was checked at random with the attendance book and found correct.
- Extras 40.- The extras paid for the same period were Rs.1253,25 cs
- Capture of turtles 41.- Since last visit 84 turtles were captured and labourers received a total of Rs.420, making Rs.5 per turtle captured.

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Savings Bank

42.- The sums deposited in the hands of the Manager amounted to Rs.946,56cs.

Exports

43.- The following have been the exports of the island from October 1938 - 328 volts of oil, 568 tons of coprah and 74 kgs of tortoise shell.

Remarks

44.- The population of this island struck me as being the most docile and disciplined of the whole lot. The manager is a young and efficient man who is most liked by his subordinates.

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PART III

Salomon Islands.

Departure

45.- We left Peros Island on the 3rd of June and arrived at Salomon group on the next day. The distance between the two groups is about 30 miles. Our stay on this island was much prolonged on account of a flat calm which delayed the loading and unloading operations.

Manager.

Population

→ R. Calocha Assistant. M. Charoux.

46.- On my arrival the population numbered:-

Males	80	Adults ...	47 boys
Females	66	Adults ...	46 girls

Civil Status

47.- The Civil Status registers examined by me showed that during the period starting from October 1938 to June 1939 -

Births ...	6	} were registered
Deaths ...	4	
4 marriages		

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A few errors or omissions in certain entries were set right.

Wages.

48.- The total amount of wages paid to the labourers, after lawful deductions made amounted to Rs.8,789,25cs. The pay book was checked and found correct.

Extras

49.- The amount paid for extras since last visit was Rs.569,32cs and a further sum of Rs.55 for capture of turtles.

Savings Bank

50.- At the time of my visit the sums deposited in the hands of the manager amounted to Rs.1,760,26cs.

Shop.

51.- The value of the articles in stock at the time of my visit was Rs. 2295,36cs. Another 4,199,43cs worth of goods was just landed. The weights and measures were tested and found correct.

Rice

52.- The stock of rice was 187 bags. 128 bags were just landed. The monthly consumption is about 55 bags.

Hospital.

53.- The hospital was clean. The surgical instruments were in good condition. The dental instruments being rusty. I recommended their renewal. I examined and signed the register which showed that since last visit 11 patients were admitted for treatment. Out of these number 6 women were admitted to be delivered of child; the 5 others were suffering from bronchitis, wounds of minor character and intestinal obstruction.

The midwife was dismissed towards the end of last year and pending the arrival of a duly registered midwife from Mauritius she is replaced by a female labourer.

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I have been told that great difficulty is experienced in finding competent midwives to work on the island on account of the unattractive pay they receive, Rs.12 per mensem, I believe.

When I last visited this island in 1936, I had been most ^{unfavourably} ~~unfortunately~~ impressed by the look and unhealthy appearance of the children. I record my appreciation of the good work performed by the dispenser, Mr. Madeleine, who has succeeded in eliminating ankylostomiasis by generous distribution of "chenopod" and "ricin" oil. Only a few adults are now suffering from this disease which has worked so much havoc in the past amongst the inhabitant.

Cause of death. 54.- The cause of death was reported to be Bronchitis, Intestinal obstruction.

Pharmacy. 55.- The value of medicine, drugs etc in stock at time of my visit was about Rs.300. Another Rs.154.55 worth was just landed.

Live stock. 56.- As far as could be ascertained the animals on the island were:

60 pigs, 7 horses, 24 asses, poultry, 10 ~~sheep~~,
1 cow, 2 bulls and 2 heifers.

Camp. 57.- I visited the camp which I found very clean and well kept.

The camp has been rebuilt entirely on modern lines and the wooden houses look pretty and comfortable.

Administration of Justice. 58.- I dealt with two cases during my stay. One was a case of attempt at wounds and blows on the person

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of a commandeur(one local sirdar). Being given the trifling nature of this offence and the particular circumstances of this case I sentenced the accused to pay a fine of Rs.5, with costs. The evidence adduced disclosed that on the occasion of the new year the male population indulged in prolonged libations in the course of which a quarrel broke out between victim and the accused.

The second case was one of wounds and blows inflicted by a labourer on his paramour. He pleaded guilty and was fined Rs.10, with costs. These amounts have been handed to the Assistant District Clerk IIInd Division to be paid to the Treasury.

Prison.

59.- The prison building was clean. The prison register showed that since last visit no sentence had been inflicted by the manager.

Exports

60.- Since last visit 387 tons of coprah have been exported.

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PART IV

Six Islands.

61.- Only recently there used to be a permanent establishment on this small group.

As it proved too costly the Company has decided to close it down, as a separate establishment. It now depends on Solomon group for purposes of control and administration. At the time of my visit there were 8 men working on these islands: I met them on their return to Salomon Islands: all were content.

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A nice little vessel plies every month between the islands and bring the labourers back to their headquarters where they receive their pay and rations.

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PART V

General Remarks.

This time, a good weather permitting I availed myself of every opportunity afforded to me to collect as much material on matters connected with the well being of the islands and the welfare of the inhabitant.

Much praise is due to Reverend Father R. Dussercle for his good and generous work for the moral and spiritual welfare of the labourers on the islands.

From the day of the arrival of the ship up to very day on which she leaves this kind-hearted and very zealous missionary is to be seen constantly and freely mixing with the labourers of the island with a view to making them profit by benefit of christian teaching.

It is in no small measure due to his excellent work on the islands that discipline and well behaviour of the labourers is so good.

Work

- 1.- Boys and girls start to work at the age of 16. Until they are physically strong enough to perform the work of adults, they are given same work as female labourers. The men, women and children camp on islands ~~adjourned~~ ^{adjourned} to the main island where they are provided with decent sheds, rations and water. The

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female labourers and the younger ^{population is employed} on clearing work; the task set ~~out~~ is 10 "gaulettes" (of 10 feet each) per day. The task of the men consists in collecting and husking from about 500 to 600 coco nuts per day. A good worker can collect and husk about 1000 nuts per day and thus earn extra wages.

The men earn R.8 per mensem for their task; the boys and women get Rs.6. A bonus of R.1 per mensem is given to those who work full time. Those other labourers who stay permanently on the main establishment also collect and husk nuts and are otherwise employed in the manufacture of coprah.

Those rendered unfit for labour by age or illness are given a pension of Rs.3.- per mensem and also receive rations.

Oarsmen

2.- There are two teams of oarsmen on each island (main). They ply every day between the main establishment and the adjoining islands to carry ^{nuts} across the lagoon. Their tasks consists in carrying 2000 nuts per day; an average of 5000 is easily carried. The boats used by them are locally made by competent marine carpenters and are of remarkable build. Except for a certain season of the year the sea is generally smooth.

From what I saw an average worker may easily earn Rs.20 per mensem. When the earnings of the wife and children are added to that of the head of the family the amount is more than sufficient to keep the whole family comfortably.

Health and sanitation.

3.- On the whole the population on the island is now very healthy. The men are of a fine and strong build

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especially at Peros and Solomon islands where most of them have been born. An ill-defined disease had prevailed until recently and was commonly termed "guim-guimbe": the people suffering from it felt weak in the limbs and were slack at work. About two years ago Dr. Barbeau visited the islands at the request of the agent in Mauritius and he came to the conclusion that this disease was the "digue" fever, well known in Mauritius. He prescribed tonics and the consequential result is that now this disease has disappeared. I was also pleased to find that ankylostomiasis had almost been eliminated. This gratifying state of affairs can only be maintained by constant supervision on the part of the dispenser who should take preventive measures and ~~to~~ exert sanitary control.

This is
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The state of things would be made better if the dispenser stewards were subjected to a special training and underwent a course of practical instruction in the duties of sanitary inspector; they would then be in a position to give reliable advice on sanitary subject and disseminate the knowledge of elementary hygiene practice. Almost all confinements were conducted in the hospitals. The dietary in hospitals consists of chicken, bread, tea, milk and sago.

Water.

4.- The water collected from wells in the camp is of good quality; up to the present day there has been no outbreak of disease attributable to water-born infection. I think it would be unnecessary to impose on the company to provide each hut with its own water

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saving cistern; the population would not use them.

Agriculture.

5.- Vegetables obtainable all the year round are "langue de vache", pumpkins and bredes. There are also plenty of bananas and lemons. Each hut is provided with a small garden but unfortunately the labourers, all of negro stock are reluctant to till the soil. This voyage a mission of scientists composed of Messrs Guerandel and P.O.Wiehe and F.E.Lionnet visited the island at the request of Mr. B.Lionnet the agent in Mauritius. I have no doubt that their report, especially on the more practical subject, will result in most beneficial effect. For instance use of guano available on the island would bring the soil into a state of greater fertility and gardens would maintain a steady supply of vegetables.

Milk supply.

among 239 people

6.- As a result of recommendations made in 1936 relative to experiment in the raising of dairy cattle there exist at present on Solomon Island one bull, one cow and two heifers. The cow, at the time of my visit, was giving about 8 bottles of milk daily. I congratulated the Government Veterinary Surgeon, Dr.F.E.Lionnet for the care and pains taken by him in order to supply the island with fresh milk. During last visit he supplied to the manager all possible information concerning the feeding of the animals. I had long talks with this officer on the subject of rearing cattle on the islands and he told me that after careful investigation he thought that the conditions prevailing on them would render them suitable sites for breeding centres. I have always thought

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that the question of fresh milk supply should be one of the aims of a competent manager. I was pleased to see that the milk supply at Solomon Island was sufficient enough to allow of milk being sold at a very reasonable price to the inhabitants.

Arrival.

7.- I left Diego Island on the 14th of June and arrived at Port Louis on the 20th instant.

Soon after we had left Diego harbour a leak was detected. It seems as if that before the boat is allowed to proceed out to sea a sufficient examination of its hull is not made with the result that on any one of these trips a disaster may occur.

Before concluding my report I beg to report my appreciation of the courtesy extended to me by the manager, the agent in Mauritius, Mr. Richard Lionnet as well as by the captain, officers and other members of the crew.

19th June, 1939.

(sd) Maurice Rousset
Ag. District Magistrate
Lesser Dependencies.

WASHINGTON TEL. NO. 3522 TO FCO

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THE AMERICAN WOULD, HOWEVER, HAVE TO INCREASE THEIR NUMBERS SOMEWHAT TO PROVIDE SHORE INSTALLATIONS AND SERVICES THAT THE BRITISH NOW PROVIDE.

THE PREVAILING VIEW AMONG STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS IS THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD CLING TO THIS MODEST PRESENCE IN THE GULF. BUT SOME WHO DO NOT BELIEVE THE SHEIKDOMS OF THE GULF CAN LAST MANY YEARS, AND WHO EXPECT AN ASCENDANCY OF LEFTIST REGIMES HOSTILE TO THE UNITED STATES ARGUE THAT THERE IS NO FUTURE FOR AN AMERICAN BASED ON BAHREIN. THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE UNITED STATES FALL BACK TO DIEGO GARCIA, WHICH HAS A MINIMUM OF POLITICAL PROBLEMS, BEFORE THE UNITED STATES IS PUSHED.

THEY SEE DIEGO GARCIA ALSO AS A PLACE TO WHICH THE AMERICAN COMMUNICATIONS CENTER AND TRACKING STATION NOW AT KAGNEW, IN ETHIOPIA, COULD BE TRANSFERRED IF THE POLITICAL CLIMATE THERE SHOULD REQUIRE IT.

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