

Authority NND 969023
By KD NARA Date 8/13

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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Action Taken NoneA-437
NO.

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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO : Am Embassies LONDON, MOSCOW, PORT LOUIS, SINGAPORE
and WELLINGTON; Am Consulates BRISBANE, MELBOURNE, Dec 23
PERTH and SYDNEY, and CINCPAC

Action Office Symbol ANZ

FROM : Am Embassy CANBERRA

DATE Dec 23, 1970

SUBJECT : Soviet Embassy Fishes in Indian Ocean, Gets Its Lines
Tangled.

REF :

1. The November 21 edition of the Soviet News Bulletin, published by the Press Office of the Soviet Embassy in Canberra, carried an article entitled "Pretexts for New Bases" by Spartak Beglov, identified as "APN Political Observer." As is the case with most articles in the Soviet News Bulletin, the Beglov article was awkwardly translated. It provided a Soviet propaganda description of the establishment of "imperialist" bases in the Indian Ocean area, citing in this context the Australian decision to develop a modest naval base at Cockburn Sound in Western Australia as in effect offering a war base "which would link together this clumsy set-up of aggressive blocs." In this connection, the article made reference to a "Pacific Asian Treaty Organization" (PATO), presumably a reference to ASPAC and a "South Atlantic Treaty Organization" (SATO).

2. The Soviet story did not reach the Australian press until November 26, not long after several stories appeared concerning prospects for establishment of a British naval base at Diego Garcia. Copies for the Department of Foreign Affairs and this Embassy were also received several days late. The delays in distribution were apparently caused by the Soviet Embassy's failure to put postage stamps on most of the bulletins.

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SECRET
A. COPIES OF THE REPORTS FROM THE STATE DEPT. WILL BE DELIVERED TO THE

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AND THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
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3. Officers of the Department of Foreign Affairs decided to keep the matter in relatively low key and express the Department's displeasure to Counsellor M. V. Smirnov rather than Ambassador Mesyatsev, who speaks virtually no English. Smirnov was called in by Richard Woolcott, former Australian High Commissioner in Ghana who is temporarily acting as Assistant Secretary for Europe, Africa, Middle East and Commonwealth Affairs. Woolcott informed Smirnov that the Department did not "like" the tone of the Beglov article and its tendency to link Australia with non-existent blocs and pacts such as "PATO" and "SATO." Woolcott said that this was not consistent with a desire to improve Soviet-Australian relations, nor was it "sensible." The Department of Foreign Affairs, he said, objected both to the manner of dissemination and to the errors of fact.

4. Smirnov attempted to explain (rather lamely, according to Woolcott) that the article was merely a "topical" item written by a private journalist for a "news agency." Woolcott cut off this argument by pointing out that there is no genuinely private news agency in the USSR, and that in any event the article was disseminated in the official Soviet Embassy News Bulletin. He also reminded Smirnov that the Australian Embassy in Moscow is not permitted to put out a similar news bulletin.

5. According to Woolcott, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, both in Sydney at the time, had been considerably exercised about the article and the attendant publicity. Having received word of Woolcott's conversation with Smirnov, they instructed DFA Secretary Sir Keith Waller to inform Soviet Ambassador Mesyatsev personally that Woolcott's comments represented the views of the Government of Australia, and not merely those of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Sir Keith subsequently implemented his instructions in conversation with Ambassador Mesyatsev at the Yugoslav National Day Reception.

Some of the articles appear, in fact, to be literal retractions into English from Russian of articles originally written in English, by persons who do not understand the original idiom.

7. Copies of the article from the Soviet News Bulletin are attached.

AK
RICE

PRETEXTS FOR NEW BASES

Spartak Beglov, APN political observer

After reading in mid-November announcements carried by British newspaper's concerning an Anglo-American plan for setting up a big military base on Diego-Garcia island, I concluded that precisely herein one should seek a clue to the noisy campaign in Western papers as regards so-called "Soviet military presence in the Indian ocean".

It will be a mistake to believe this Western version and infer that the decision on the construction of the base is merely a "forced reply" to a suddenly emergent "threat". This is the impression British and U.S. military and propaganda headquarters want to create. In reality, the idea of the base had originated much earlier than the excuse was found for it.

The small atoll island of Diego-Garcia is part of the Chagos Archipelago, situated in the very center of the Indian ocean. After Mauritius had been granted independence, Britain bought this atoll from the Mauritius government for 3,000,000 pounds.

The idea of establishing a base on this atoll first came under discussions between the USA and Britain in 1964 (we stress: 1964!), i.e. under the former Tory government. This is what the British "Guardian" November 16 testifies. Yet the Labour government, which later came to power, put the thing aside in connection with its new policy cutting down British military commitments and expenses East of Suez.

While in opposition, the conservatives criticised the labourites because their line was aimed at "eliminating" the remnants of Britain's imperialist might and impact in the East. At the time there was no mention of "Soviet threat" among the conservatives' arguments. The causes were called by their proper names: the interests of big British capital investors and the owners of oil resources and other raw materials.

On taking power, the Tories immediately declared their intention to restore the British positions East of Suez. Thus, they declared about arms supplies to the racist regime of the South-African republic and,

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of Soviet sea frontiers is 47,000 km.

One merely has to glance at the map to make sure that a ship bound from a Soviet port, say Leningrad (30 degrees Eastern longitude), to another port, say Vladivostok (140 degrees Eastern longitude), must double half the globe. The three-year idleness of the Suez Canal, as a result of Israeli aggression against Egypt has led to these communications being practically doubled. It is not Soviet ships alone which have started to appear at the meridian of Capetown and Mauritius, but also the vessels of all countries practising fishing and merchant-and-passenger navigation. The problems involved in the provision of fuel and water supplies for the communications, as well as their maintenance and protection, have increased in the same proportion.

It ought to be said that the growth of the Soviet marine is a manifestation of Soviet economic advance. The proportional expansion of the Soviet

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NEA-13 SR-01 ORM-03 IO-13 RSR-01 /145 W

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT LINE 8)

SUBJECT: DIEGO GARCIA

REF: PORT LOUIS 1109

DEF IS IND-US

AFTER RUNNING WIRE SERVICE REPORT ON DIEGO ANNOUNCEMENT, MAURITIAN PRESS WITH TWO EXCEPTIONS HAS GIVEN LITTLE ATTENTION TO ISSUE. INDEPENDENT EXPRESS DECEMBER 16 GAVE HISTORICAL RUNDOWN OF PROJECT AND SPECULATED ON EMPLOYMENT POSSIBILITIES. DECEMBER 21 OPPOSITION MAURICIEN DESCRIBED PLIGHT 300 JOBLESS, UNEMPLOYED "ILOIS" EXPELLED FROM DIEGO GARCIA WHO ARRIVED IN MAURITIUS AFTER INDEPENDENCE. PAPER REPORTS UDM POLITICIAN OLLIVRY TAKING THEIR CASE TO BRITISH AND IF UNSUCCESSFUL WILL APPEAL TO UN "COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES". MAURITIANS REMAIN PREOCCUPIED WITH INTERNAL PROBLEMS. NEITHER MMM NOR OTHER POLITICAL OPPOSITION HAS REFERRED DIEGO ISSUE. BREWER

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