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2ND DRAFT

BIOT WORKING PAPERS

Paper No.5 - Evacuation & Resettlement of
Inhabitants of Chagos Archipelago

This paper deals with the evacuation and resettlement where necessary of the people at present working in the Chagos Archipelago together with their families:-

	<u>Seychellois</u>	<u>Ilois</u>	<u>Mauritians</u>
Peros Banhos	65	168	11
Salomon	22	138	23
Diego Garcia	230	128	22
	<u>317</u>	<u>434</u>	<u>56</u>

In this total there are 282 men, 171 women and 354 children. As noted in earlier papers there are also approximately 370 Ilois at present in Mauritius thought to be awaiting re-employment in Chagos, and it must be assumed that any public statement regarding resettlement would lead some or all of these people to apply to be treated on the same basis as the Ilois at present in the Chagos.

2. Our information about possible ways of resettling the people with a claim to resettlement is very limited, and it is only possible in this paper to deal with the subject in general terms.

3. The main object of evacuation and resettlement would be to solve once and for all the latent political problem of the continuing present of the Ilois in Chagos, a problem which cannot be resolved by relocation of these people in Peros Banhos and Salomon on the lines discussed in Paper No.4.

4. In considering evacuation of the whole of the Archipelago it should be noted that a different time scale could be applied to Diego Garcia on the one hand and Peros Banhos and Salomon on the other. According to available American estimates of the construction time-table it will be necessary to evacuate the people from Diego Garcia (other than any temporarily kept there in employment on construction) in early 1970. There seems to be no strong reason why evacuation of Peros Banhos and Salomon should not be deferred to a later date; and it might be possible to make use of these islands for a time to accommodate some of the people from Diego

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Garcis (although this might well require the provision of additional housing).

5. The background to the problem of evacuation of the Chagos Archipelago lies in the adverse employment situation in Mauritius and Seychelles, and the absence of other hopeful destinations for the people

Possible Destinations

6. Mauritius and Agalega

The island of Mauritius itself suffers from 20% unemployment and the High Commissioner, Port Louis, reports that the Government of Mauritius are unlikely to welcome the return of some 250 families except on generous compensation terms. This could be expected to include elements for housing, relief work payments and family allowances. They might argue that it would be nearly impossible to find suitable employment for them, since there is no copra industry in the island into which they could be absorbed, that a resettlement of this size would increase the pressure on existing educational and health facilities that the Ilois and their dependents would be a long term liability and that additional facilities should be financed by us in the areas where they are resettled. The Mauritians may also be expected to raise again the question of the resettlement of the Ilois at present in Mauritius.

7. A more satisfactory solution might be to negotiate resettlement of Mauritian citizens from Chagos in the only coconut producing island within Mauritian territory, viz. Agalega. This had originally been our intention when B.I.O.T. was established in 1965. We cannot assess the chances of success in this, which would involve complicated negotiations; but the possibilities should certainly be explored. The (limited) further information we have about Agalega is set out in the Annex.

8. Seychelles

Judging from the figures which we have in London the unemployment situation in Seychelles is even worse than that in Mauritius. An unemployment rate as high as 27 1/2% has been reported. As in the case of Mauritius, however, these figures need interpretation in the light of local conditions before deductions are based on them.

- 2 -

SECRET

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9. There are hopes in Seychelles of economic development resulting from the construction of the new airport and the Governor has reported that, notwithstanding the serious unemployment problem in the colony, it would be possible for the Seychelles to accept the return of the Seychellois formerly working in B.I.O.T. But he has made it clear that resettlement of Ilois or Mauritians in Seychelles territory would be unacceptable, both economically and politically.

Other Destinations

10. The sombre employment situation in both Mauritius and the Seychelles raises the question of other possible destinations for people who can claim resettlement. It has been suggested that the purchase of a copra producing island or islands, possibly in the Maldives, should be considered. At first sight, prospects in the Maldives are not encouraging but it may be desirable to explore any such possibilities in greater detail, although it can be assumed that they would prove expensive (Mr. Moulinie was paid about £660,000 for the freehold of the Chagos Islands.)

Claims of Separate Elements in the Population

11. Seychellois

There are no special nationality or political problems in the return of the Seychellois to the Seychelles on the expiry of their current contracts. They are a migratory labour force and we have not envisaged special arrangements for "resettling" them (although, if resettlement becomes a public issue they may well claim such treatment). Some of them may get temporary employment on the construction of the defence facility. It may be necessary to make payments to others in respect of the unexpired period of their contracts. But we would not expect undue difficulty in dealing with these difficulties.

12. Mauritians

The 56 Mauritians do appear to represent a resettlement commitment as H.M.G. have undertaken to pay for the resettlement of all Mauritians, including Ilois, who may be returned to Mauritius following their evacuation from Chagos (see Paper No.2).

13. Ilois

It is the Ilois who present the main problem (see Paper No.3). They have traditionally worked and lived in Chagos and can claim no skills other than those of coconut plantation workers. The

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movement of this class therefore would involve not only uprooting them from their traditional homes and settling them elsewhere but also providing them with a new livelihood, unless they can be resettled in an area where a copra industry exists. As noted earlier, the main island of Mauritius has no established copra industry.

14. From the political point of view it seems clear that resettlement in Mauritian territory would provide the best (perhaps the only) final solution to this problem. The difficulty is likely to be the economic one noted above. The problems and cost involved in resettling the Ilois in Mauritius cannot be assessed without an approach to the Mauritian Government. In view of the grave economic and social problems of the country they must be expected to negotiate for the best possible terms of resettlement. Humanitarian consideration and the need for us to avoid adverse publicity in Mauritius and elsewhere (notably at the U.N.) would be factors in the situation.

15. From the British viewpoint, considering the need to reach a reasonable settlement in an atmosphere which would not generate adverse publicity and its international repercussions it would be necessary to deal with the problem in close co-operation with the Mauritius Government. It would obviously be preferable to avoid the presentation of a dramatic or sudden exodus from the whole of the Chagos Archipelago, and it would be possible to do this, as noted earlier, by dealing with Diego Garcia early in 1970, and the rest of the Chagos later at whatever tempo was judged desirable. Continued use of Peros Banhos and Salomon in this way could give us valuable time while full agreement is being sought with the Mauritian Government. This course might however involve problems of presentation of the decisions taken, which fall outside the scope of this paper.

Pacific & Indian Ocean Department
March 1969

- 4 -

SECRET

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ANNEX

AGALEGA

Very little recent information is available here about Agalega. It was considered for inclusion in B.I.O.T. but eventually excluded when the territory was created in 1965. The following is taken from the report of the Colonial Office Member (Mr. Robert Newton) of the Joint Anglo-U.S. Survey team who visited the island in August 1964.

"Agalega consists of two islands, North and South, joined by a sandbank about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles long which can be crossed on foot at low tide. North Island is 7 miles long and between one and four miles wide. South Island is 4 miles long and three miles wide at its broadest part. The two islands contain about 4,000 acres planted with coconut. There are plans to increase the coconut plantations by at least 1,000 acres on North Island. Agalega is about 360 miles from Mahe and 580 miles from Mauritius. The population is about 90% Seychellois."

2. Coconut growing operations on Agalega are controlled by Mr. Moulinie, who now personally manages the coconut operations in Chagos on behalf of H.M.G. and is the majority shareholder in the present Agalega Company.
3. It was known in early 1968 that Mr. Moulinie had plans to expand operations in Agalega and indeed the Agalega Company had stated that they could take all the Ilois who could be made available. In June 1968, the Commissioner of B.I.O.T. proposed, among other schemes for the evacuation of Ilois from Chagos, a scheme for resettling them on Agalega, but expressed doubts as to whether Agalega could absorb all the Ilois from Chagos. In the same month, the Administrator of B.I.O.T. learnt from Mr. Moulinie that he was "concerned with the political situation in Mauritius and was watching developments there before beginning any expansion on Agalega."
4. It is probable that the majority of workers on Agalega are now, as they were in 1964, Seychellois labourers under contract who can be regarded as essentially migratory. It may be possible therefore to persuade the Agalega Company to replace these labourers with

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Ilois as and when their contracts expire and so give the evacuation of the Ilois the character of a change of one contract of employment for another rather than a sudden population exodus.

5. Clearly such a solution would need to be acceptable to:-
- (a) the Agalega Company
 - (b) the Mauritian Government
 - (c) the Ilois and Seychellois themselves.

To achieve success an imaginative and possibly expensive scheme might therefore have to be devised to offer advantages to all concerned. The Agalega Company might have to be attracted by an infusion of British Government capital in their Agalega operation. The Mauritian Government could be attracted by the prospect of development of one of their islands at H.M.G.'s expense and the removal of the previous potential threat of the return of the Ilois to increase the harsh unemployment prevailing in Mauritius. The Ilois could be attracted by the prospect of improved housing and guaranteed employment (which we may need to underwrite).

Pacific & Indian Ocean Department
March 1969

- 6 -

SECRET