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Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
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United Nations (Political) Dept.,

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B. I. O. T.

Thank you for your two letters 4/31/84 and 4/31/87 of 5 and 12 February respectively, in which you outlined the prospects for the reception of the Kiego Garcia project in the U.N.

2. We were very interested in your analysis (paragraphs 3 and 4 of your letter of 5 February) of the way in which debate might fail to develop. We agree that there is a prospect that the ignorance and confused thinking prevailing in international circles on this island could enable us to dodge the real issues, in the first instance when the Diego Garcia project is announced.

3. However, we do not feel that we should be complacent about future developments. We think that the relative lack of interest so far has been due as much to our fortuitous ability to deny that we had set up any military facilities in this area (bolstered by our recent announcement in the U.N. that "the whole idea of staging is being dropped") as to the subsequent emergence of Mauritius as an independent state. Can we hope that the emotions aroused by the creation of a new dependency for military purposes will reemerge only in a limp and ephemeral form on the announcement of the plans for constructing naval facilities with a supporting airfield on Diego Garcia?

4. Certainly, as you say, the particular form in which the attack was first mounted - the disruption of the territorial integrity of Mauritius - will no longer be open to our opponents in the U.N. (provided always that Mauritius will not choose to air any subsequent grievance against us about BIOT). But given the lack of any publicly aired Mauritian resentment against the continued detachment of these islands, the tacit agreement of an independent Mauritius to the existence of BIOT should dispose of the arguments of a dependency with an administering power is no agreement at all. *that an agreement.*

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But we must not underestimate Afro/Asian skill in discovering our weaknesses. While they cannot discuss Diego Garcia, a former Mauritian dependency, under the Seychelles item, it can of course be discussed under the item "military activities which impede independence". Although we do not participate in these discussions, this forum will give hostile members and the Secretariat the opportunity to indulge their curiosity in the people of the territory, who form the vulnerable aspect of our case. Moreover, we cannot rule out that our opponents might belatedly acknowledge that BIOT is now a separate legal entity (as we have explained), however much they may think its creation was in breach of paragraph 6 of GA Resolution 1514 (XV). It is therefore possible that they could proceed to inscribe it on the agenda of the Committee of 24 as a separate colony. While it may take them some time to decide how best procedurally to discuss BIOT (a valuable respite to us) the various stages through which the project must travel in the U.S. legislature, the lengthy construction period, pressures in Lok Sabha and possible friction which we may suffer with Mauritius over the redeployment of the labour force may all provide the incentive to keep this subject alive in the U.N. Moreover we cannot rule out the possibility that additional facilities can be introduced into BIOT in the next few years which would fan the flame.

5. It is now extremely doubtful whether it is still open to us to use the Formula (on which in paragraph 4 of your letter of 5 February you still place reliance) viz. that contained in paragraph 19 of IOC(66)136 that the inhabitants are essentially a migratory force. We discovered last year that out of the total 1968 population of BIOT of 959 souls, 434 (or nearly half) were at least second generation inhabitants (the so-called "Ilois"). (I enclose a copy of a paper recently produced by the Administrator which you may find a useful addition to your BIOT dossier). When the IOC formula received ministerial approval in 1966 we thought that there were many fewer second generation inhabitants than this and in any case we had hoped to dispose of the Ilois problem while Mauritius was still a colony.

6. I do not think we can either in the longer or the shorter term exclude the possibility that this semi-permanent population will find themselves in the international limelight. If interest in them became strong enough, the press for example may well discover that they exist in significant numbers. (You may recall the Press interest in the wild life of Aldabra.) If attention were drawn to them we should find it difficult to assert that BIOT is not a "non-self-governing territory" and that we had no obligations in respect of it under Chapter XI of the Charter. In particular we should find it extremely difficult to deny that we had sufficiently honoured or are now honouring our Charter obligation "to ensure . . . their political, economic, social and educational advancement". No proper schools or hospitals exist  
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in these islands and there are no representative political institutions. Already our political anxieties on this score coincide with the Treasury's anxiety to avoid an expanding financial commitment in these fields.

7. We recognise the immediate attraction of Solution A in paragraph 3 of Sykes' letter of 6 February to Stoddart in the U.S. Embassy; but we still think that the continued presence of the Ilois within BIOT is of considerable potential embarrassment. The deployment of our case under the Charter over Gibraltar could be shown by our critics to be at variance with a denial of Charter responsibilities towards people entering their third or fourth generation of residence in another of our Dependencies. It is true that the Mauritius Constitution gives the present Ilois an automatic right to Mauritius citizenship, but equally U.K. legislation accords them citizenship of the U.K. and Colonies. Moreover, the children of those born in the Chagos part of BIOT after Mauritian independence will, unlike their parents, not be dual citizens but only citizens of the U.K. and Colonies. Thus in perhaps 14 or 15 years time we shall have a generation who can truly claim to be "belongers" to BIOT.

8. While time will not permit, before the announcement of the Diego Garcia Project, a solution on the lines of Solution B in Sykes' letter mentioned above, we are at present examining very carefully whether it would be possible to return the Ilois to Mauritius with the friendly co-operation of the Mauritius Government, who of course remain so far ignorant of any such proposition. I will let you know our ideas about this in due course but I hope we need not assume at this stage that any scheme which we could propose to the Mauritius Government will necessarily be open to humanitarian objections. The essential problem in this area is employment and provided we could ourselves help to create employment (possibly both by money and organisation) not necessarily within the island of Mauritius itself since there still remain at least one coconut-producing outer island within Mauritius jurisdiction, there may yet be a basis for a friendly and unobtrusive re-settlement of the Ilois outside BIOT in the relatively near future. (We have in mind Atleaga. Although its possibilities may be limited - its area is only 27 sq. miles and it already has a population of around 400 - its suitability for this purpose seems worth exploring.) We would agree however that any proposition to this effect needs to be very carefully worked out to avoid the possible risk of criticism on humanitarian grounds. Publicity is bound to be a danger.

9. Until we have cleared our minds about the possibility of such resettlement, I doubt whether it would be feasible  
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at this stage to work out alternatives to the IOC formula in preparing defensive statements about the population. Our strongest card is the fact that the Ilois are still contract labourers with Mauritian citizenship but until we can judge whether there is any prospect of returning them to a Mauritian island, it could be unwise to refer to them as essentially migratory.

10. This represents our preliminary thinking and I will keep you in touch with developments on these matters. Meanwhile we should naturally be interested in any further comment you may have on the U.N. implications.

(J. H. Lambert)

c.c. to:

M. Wilford, Esq., Washington.  
Chanceries New Delhi } with copies of letters under reference.  
Port Louis }  
Administrator, BIOT.

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