

Before I say anything else, it is legitimate to ask--as Matthew Parris asked in Saturday's article in *The Times* that has been studied in the Foreign Office--for at least an explanation from Eleanor Emery and others as to why they did that. If a case can be made for their actions, it is up to the Minister and the Foreign Office to tell us why they did what they did. I suspect that it was about the Anglo-American relationship.

I now turn to the confidential document of 26 July 1968 that was released to the court, signed by Michael Stewart. I should explain that I knew the late Michael Stewart very well. I was his deputy on the first Labour delegation to the indirectly elected European Parliament at Strasbourg. I was asked to write his obituary for *The Independent*, and later I was asked to write 800 well-sculpted words for the "Dictionary of National Biography". When one is given a viva voce on a person by those in charge of the DNB, it means that one knows that person fairly well.

Michael Stewart's document said on page 6:

Resettlement will involve some small expenses but it is not expected that there will be any financial difficulty in this. When the arrangements are complete, and they may be complicated by a recently completed survey which found that 128 individuals (about 34 per cent. of the total population of 389) are now second generation inhabitants of Diego Garcia, we would propose, as agreed at the time of the creation of the British Indian Ocean Territory, to deny, if necessary, the competence of the United Nations to concern itself with a territory which has no indigenous population. That is just not the case. By any stretch of the English language, there was an indigenous population, and the Foreign Office knew it. I suspect that that is why, on a Strasbourg night, Michael Stewart apologised for the actions taken over the British Indian Ocean Territory.

I also suspect that that is why Harold Wilson, to whom I used to gossip a lot when he was Prime Minister and afterwards, came as near to making an apology as he ever did on anything. I am a great admirer of Wilson, but he was a great self-justifier, and on this issue there was a good deal of embarrassment. Edward Heath ought to feel some embarrassment because on 8 December 1970, oral question No. 6 was:

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if he will pay an official visit to the Chagos archipelago in the Indian Ocean. Mr. Heath said:

I have no plans to do so. I said:

Are we building a £120 million base in the archipelago?--[*Official Report*, 8 December 1970; Vol. 808, c. 245.] There was a curt reply, which was followed up by Frank Allaun and Sir Frederick Bennett for the Conservatives. The issue had been drawn to the Prime Minister's attention. Surely Parliament has some right in thinking that when these matters are dealt with at the highest level some attention will be paid to the truth.

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