

Ref. No. EIOE/157/172/III



OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR,  
B. I. O. T.  
VICTORIA,  
SEYCHELLES.

*Mr. Gagnon* *jk*

*Mr. King*

24/2/71

CONFIDENTIAL

17th February 1971

I returned on the evening of 2nd February from my visit to Chagos. In addition to the nine members of the U.S. reconnaissance party, Paul Moulinie also came along.

2. We left Mahe on 19th January and arrived in Diego Garcia on the 23rd. The reconnaissance party, helped by a boat and a tractor and trailer from the plantation, got down to work whilst I collected the various details necessary to arrange the evacuation of the island. On the 24th January I told all the inhabitants that we intended to close the island in July but, that for some time, we would be continuing to run Peros Banhos and Salomon and that we would send as many people as possible from Diego Garcia to these two islands. This drew no comment from the Seychellois but a few of the Ilois asked whether they could return to Mauritius instead and receive some compensation for leaving their "own country". I played this one into touch by saying that our intention was to cause as little disruption of their lives as possible and that due to the difficulties of communications with Mauritius it would not be possible to arrange a return there until towards the middle of the year when the M.V. Mauritius would resume its calls at Mahe.

3. Paul Moulinie and I left Diego Garcia on the evening of 24th January and went first to Salomon and then to Peros Banhos where we obtained details of those on the islands and the accommodation available. We returned to Diego Garcia on the 27th January.

4. The detailed position on the islands is shown in the attachment to this letter. As you will see we shall in July have on Diego Garcia 36 Ilois families (36 men, 37 women and 64 children), 1 Mauritian and 45 Seychellois families (45 men, 17 women and 30 children). The 36 Ilois families and the single Mauritian should then go to Peros Banhos and Salomon. Only 10 families will have left these islands by then but by reorganizing the allocation of some quarters and carrying out limited repairs on others, we will be able to absorb the 37 Diego Garcia families without prematurely terminating the contracts of Seychellois on these islands. The Ilois will be able to be economically employed on the islands and indeed, some further labour could be absorbed if the running of the plantations was the only consideration.

*pgc*

*see 31*

5. To absorb further labour would however mean building more houses, which economically we cannot justify for a short period, and it will therefore be necessary to terminate the contracts of those Seychellois labourers left on Diego Garcia in July 1974. There are 45 families involved and the cost of compensation will be some £3,000. The cost of repairing houses on Peros and Salomon can be met from the normal running costs of the plantations and the transport costs are also a fair charge on this, as we can combine the movements with normal commercial visits. It would, I consider, be fair to pay each of the Ilois families who are moved to Peros Banhos Rs500 to compensate them for the move which will involve them in some expense as they will have to leave some of the fittings which they own in their houses. This would add a further £1,350 to the cost of the move, bringing the total to £4,350.

6. One problem we shall have to face is that mentioned in paragraph 2, the problem of those Ilois who would prefer to go to Mauritius or Agalaga. Moulinie has agreed to transfer any who wish to go to Agalaga to that island. This leaves the more difficult problem of those who wish to return to Mauritius. Under the terms of their employment we cannot refuse to allow them to return if they so wish, as they have all completed their contracts. At the same time it would obviously be embarrassing for us if they arrived in Mauritius with at most their Rs500 disturbance payment in their pockets. All we can do is to encourage them to go to Peros Banhos and Salomon. The offer of the Rs500 only to those who did so would help, but it would be more helpful if we could at that stage tell them that the move to the other islands was intended as a temporary one whilst we worked out a detailed scheme to provide adequately for their future.

7. Moulinie remains hesitant about any definite scheme for Agalaga. All I have been able to get out of him is a general statement on the island, a copy of which I am attaching to this letter. I will continue to press him when suitable opportunities present themselves, but I can hold out little hope of a firm practical plan emerging unless we can make the first move by making a concrete offer of assistance. This could only be done after a visit to the island by an expert which would mean obtaining the agreement of the Mauritian Government. This changes round our proposed approach and may well complicate your position with the Mauritius Government, but I think it is the only approach which will effectively get anything constructive out of Moulinie.

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C E S L

ILOIS				MAURITIANS				SEYCHELLOIS				
Families	Men	Women	Children	Families	Men	Women	Children	Families	Men	Women	Children	
DING GAZETA												
Total on Island			36	36	27	64	3	3	1	92	39	52
January 1971			-	-	-	-	2	2	-	47	22	42
Due to leave Island			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	3
before mid-July 1971			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	4
Balance remaining :			36	36	27	64	1	1	1	45	17	30
PEROS BARRIOS												
Total on Island			33	27	25	75	2	1	1	28	5	13
January 1971			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	3
Due to leave Island			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	3
before mid-July 1971			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	4
Balance remaining :			33	27	25	75	2	1	1	24	3	10
SALOON												
Total on Island			31	30	22	81	1	1	1	10	-	-
January 1971			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
Due to leave Island			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
before mid-July 1971			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-
Balance remaining :			31	30	22	81	1	1	1	5	-	-

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AGALIGA ISLAND.

Its potential and features.

What is known as Agaliga Island, lying at about 365 miles south of Male, is an elevated reef of about 15 miles long, stretching from North to South, out at about two third of its length, starting from the North, by a strip of shallow water of about one and a half miles long.

It is very easy to walk from North to South without meeting more than ankle deep water. A coach drawn by two horses is sometimes used for a quick crossing and this mode of transport is well appreciated by the visitors.

The transport of stores and products is made by tractor-drawn trailers and boats.

The main settlement "St. Rita" is situated on the South but all the landings and loadings now take place at "St. James" situated on the North, because the mole of the Port of "St. Rita" has been destroyed by the 1951 cyclone and has not been replaced since. Loading at "St. James" is very safe and easy from March to December but represents certain risks from December to March when the prevailing wind blows from the North.

A more practical anchorage than "St. Rita" has been found in the South but up to now the possibility of access to the shore has not been well examined and that probably because "St. James" has so far not given rise to any dissatisfaction.

There is on the South a Meteorological Station maintained by the Mauritian Government and usually run by two officers from Vacocas Mauritiens. This Station keeps an adequate and permanent wireless communication with Mauritius and Seychelles.

The population is:

Mauritians:	Men	13	Women:	8	Boys:	9	Girls:	2	Number of Mauritiens	32
Ilois :	55	48	61	42	206					
Seychellois:	57	26	26	24	133					
Total:	Men:	125	82	96	68	Inhabitants:	371			

Although there is no Doctor on the Island, medical attention can be obtained from a Dresser and a Midwife who whenever necessary take their guidance, by radio, from a Doctor stationed in Mauritius or Seychelles.



A schooner from Hilo is visiting the Island every two months to bring the provisions and transport the passengers and products. About once a year a ship from Hawaii calls to drop a Magistrate who deals with the few court cases.

The area covered by arable land is about 6000 to 7000 acres of which 2000 are good fertile soil on which maize and other various foodstuffs and vegetables could be cultivated undoubtedly with success, as proved by the results already obtained.

The water system of both Islands is at about 6 feet deep, is in many places soft and the wells' water which is abundant can be used for drinking purpose and irrigation of the most delicate plants. Although water for drinking is usually collected from the rocks.

There are about 125,000 coconut trees of bearing age. In 1970 the amount of copra produced was only 450 tons, one of the lowest registered since the last five years. This drop is due to the effects of storms sustained during 1968 and 1969.

Half of the adult trees are not bearing due to a complete lack of maintenance suffered in the past. About all of the very low bearing and non bearing trees have now been removed and some rid of the compressed sand that formed a hard pan under them. Those trees are now recovering satisfactorily and there is enough evidence to hope that their nuts will soon contribute to increase the output.

About 25,000 young trees have recently been well planted, some have already precociously started to bear. These young trees will gradually increase the production during the next five years.

One hundred thousand more trees could be planted, bringing the total of trees at present two-hundred and fifty thousand. Such a plantation, with good care could easily yield one thousand or two-thousand tons of copra per year. Working systematically such a goal could be reached within ten years and the cost of same could be absorbed by the increasing production or revenue of the Island.

A trial of cattle breeding which has unfortunately not been intensified, has been proved successful, so there is good reason to believe that with enough organization each island could feed, as they are now, about one hundred heads of cattle and there is no doubt that cows and foal of better quality could be introduced, at very low cost. Species of grass proved very suitable for corallo Islands have already been introduced and some are thriving well.

The breeding of chickens and pigs is already progressing satisfactorily and with a little more attention the number of both animals could be increased and their selection improved.

Both Islands have many beautiful house sites and long, white sandy beaches, the climate from April to October stays between 23° to 26° centigrade with a beautiful blue sky.

Big Game fishing is very practicable during the South East monsoon, from March to December and the most difficult expert is likely to find the fish he desires.

There are facilities to build more than one air strip on both Islands, at a very moderate cost, the ground being already level and except for a few bushes, free from trees or boulders. The spaces available are outside the plantations and therefore would not curtail the amount of agricultural land.

With a continuous good industry, Agalega could before the end of this decade, give a decent subsistence to about four thousand inhabitants and depending upon the management, life could be very pleasant on this beautiful and healthy Island.