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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF
INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

SUB-COMMITTEE I

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE THIRTY-SEVENTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 18 April 1967, at 3.35 p.m.

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PRESENT:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. JOUEJATI	Syria
<u>Members:</u>	Mr. KEISALO	Finland
	Mr. CHTOUROU	Tunisia
	Mr. USTINOV	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
	Mr. FOUM	United Republic of Tanzania
	Mr. PEJIC	Yugoslavia
<u>Also present:</u>	Mr. SHAW	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
<u>Secretariat:</u>	Mr. POLYAKOV	Secretary of the Sub-Committee

MAURITIUS, SEYCHELLES AND ST. HELENA (A/AC.109/L.374 and Corr.1) (continued)

At the Chairman's invitation, Mr. Shaw, representative of the United Kingdom, took a place at the Sub-Committee table.

Mr. CHTOUROU (Tunisia) pointed out that, although General Assembly resolution 2066 (XX) concerning Mauritius had invited the administering Power to take steps to implement resolution 1514 (XV), to take no action to violate the territorial integrity of Mauritius and to report to the Special Committee and the General Assembly on the implementation of resolution 2066 (XX), and although resolution 2069 (XX) concerning a number of Territories, including Seychelles and St. Helena, had called upon the administering Power to implement the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and to allow visiting missions to visit the Territories with its full co-operation and assistance, it appeared from the information provided by the United Kingdom representative that no progress along those lines had been made in the three Territories under consideration. He had asserted that the changes which had taken place or which were planned were such as to hasten the implementation of resolution 1514 (XV), but that was open to question since the administering Power had not complied with the General Assembly's request to allow visiting missions to visit the Territories. The colonial period was still too fresh in the minds of many representatives for them to believe everything an administering Power said about its administration of the Territories under its control. If the United Kingdom believed that it had fulfilled the obligations imposed on it by the international community, why did it refuse to allow representatives of the United Nations to visit the Territories and ascertain the truth of its statements? It was necessary for the United Kingdom to permit visiting missions if the present deadlock was to be broken. Everything that had been said during the current debate, including the statements of the administering Power, had already been said in previous years. All that the Sub-Committee could do, therefore, was to recommend the adoption of another resolution, reaffirm the inalienable right of the people of the Territories to self-determination and independence and request the administering Power once again to comply with United Nations resolutions. That represented no progress and it was the administering Power which was to blame. If United Nations representatives were allowed to ascertain conditions in the Territories, it would perhaps be easier to achieve a just and equitable solution of their complex problems.

(Mr. Chtourou, Tunisia)

He asked the Secretariat for clarification on two points regarding document A/AC.109/L.374. First, there appeared to be a contradiction between paragraphs 14 and 22 concerning reaction in Mauritius to the report of the Banwell Commission. Secondly, according to paragraph 31, exports of sugar to the United Kingdom in the first ten months of 1966 totalled Rs. 208.6 million, whereas according to paragraph 33 exports of sugar during the first half of 1966 showed a temporary but sharp decline to Rs. 0.5 million. That appeared to indicate that in the four months from July to October 1966 exports of sugar had increased from Rs. 0.5 million to Rs. 208.6 million and he wondered if there was not an error in the figures.

Mr. SHAW (United Kingdom), replying to questions which had been raised during the debate, said with regard to the problem of unemployment in Mauritius and the need to diversify the country's economy that it was the policy of the Mauritius Government to do everything possible to encourage the establishment of new industries and to that end a number of incentives had been provided in the shape of tariff concessions and financial assistance by the Government Development Bank. A number of new industries had already been established, or were being considered, including factories for the production of soap, margarine and edible oil, textiles and fertilizers, for the manufacture of stationery and watches, and for the processing of synthetic jewels. Discussions had been held with representatives of UNIDO on strengthening the local machinery for industrial production. In agriculture, a joint United Nations Special Fund and FAO land and water resources survey was now in progress and was expected to recommend various projects which should lead to the improvement and greater diversification of agricultural production. An Agricultural Marketing Board had been in operation for the preceding three years and the Mauritius Government had just approved a number of new schemes for agricultural co-operative credit. It was clear, therefore, that the Mauritius Government was determined to do everything possible to diversify the economy of the Territory and reduce its dependence on the production of primary commodities.

Inevitably, the Mauritius Government, like most other developing countries, had sought, in promoting local industrialization, to attract foreign capital. It was unrealistic to regard such policies as continued concessions to foreign monopolies. His delegation knew of no arrangements for foreign investment in the

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Territory which were intended to operate on a monopolistic basis or in a manner contrary to the interests of the people of Mauritius.

The representative of Syria had referred to allegations of discrimination in the sugar industry and had asked about steps being taken to protect the workers (A/AC.109/SC.2/SR.35). Conditions of employment in the sugar industry were regulated by wage councils appointed by the Mauritius Ministry of Labour and there was no discrimination among workers in any form of employment. As to the matter of hydroelectric installations, there were at present eight hydroelectric power stations operated by the Central Electricity Board of Mauritius and a ninth was to be completed by 1969. With regard to the Seychelles Taxpayers and Producers Association, he said that that organization, as indicated in paragraph 64 of document A/AC.109/L.374, had for some time ceased to exist.

The representative of Finland had invited attention to the problems of a rapidly expanding population and the desirability of an expanded family planning programme (A/AC.109/SC.2/SR.36). There was now a much wider acceptance among all shades of religious opinion and communities in the Territory of the need for family planning and, with Government support, certain voluntary agencies had already made a start.

With regard to the so-called dismemberment of Mauritius and Seychelles resulting from the establishment of the British Indian Ocean Territory, as alleged by the representatives of Syria and Tanzania (A/AC.109/SC.2/SR.35), the new Territory was made up of a number of small scattered islands separated from both Mauritius and Seychelles by many hundreds of miles. The Chagos Archipelago, for instance, although previously administered as part of Mauritius, was geographically much nearer to the Seychelles. For nearly one hundred years, all the islands, including Mauritius and Seychelles, had formed a single dependency, and thereafter, beginning about sixty years previously, the islands forming the new British Indian Ocean Territory had been attached either to Mauritius or Seychelles purely as a matter of administrative convenience. They could not be considered as a homogeneous part of either of those Territories in ethnic, geographical, economic or any other terms. The islands had no indigenous population, since they had been uninhabited when originally acquired by the United Kingdom Government and virtually all persons now living there were migrant workers. The administrative rearrangements which had

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been worked out freely with the Governments and elected representatives of the people of Mauritius and Seychelles and with their full agreement, in no sense, therefore, constituted a breach in the natural territorial and ethnic integrity of those Territories.

Some representatives, including the representative of the USSR, had implied that there was a conspiracy to delay independence and impede political development in the Territories in order to turn them into military bases (A/AC.109/SC.2/SR.36). The clear assurances given by the United Kingdom Government concerning independence for Mauritius and the information provided on constitutional progress in the Seychelles spoke for themselves. The steady progress towards full self-government and decolonization was irrefutable evidence against such allegations.

Some delegations had also made familiar allegations that the United Kingdom Government was planning to establish bases in the British Indian Ocean Territory. The allegations had been based exclusively on press reports, which were often highly speculative, since the role of the Press in the United Kingdom was not restricted to that of a subservient reflection of government policies. Those delegations should ignore such speculative comment and accept the clear statement made by the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Defence on 16 November 1966 that his Government had no programme for creating bases in the British Indian Ocean Territory. Although the United Kingdom Government had announced as long ago as November 1965 that the islands might provide potential sites for defence purposes such as refuelling or communications facilities, no decision had in fact been taken to establish any such facilities. Such possible uses were very far removed from the bogey of military bases threatening the independence of African and Asian countries which some delegations had sought to raise.

On the question raised by the representative of Syria concerning a United Nations presence during the forthcoming elections in Mauritius (A/AC.109/SC.2/SR.35), his delegation would be prepared to seek instructions on any specific request which the Committee might make, but he pointed out that the Banwell Commission's report had recommended that a team of Commonwealth observers should be present during the elections and that that recommendation had been accepted by all political parties in Mauritius.

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The representative of Syria had also asked about the need to take special account of the interests of the communities in the electoral arrangements in Mauritius. He pointed out that the Territory's population was of several different ethnic origins, and that among the political groupings and parties, there were bodies which claimed to represent the Hindu and Moslem communities. Under the previous system, it had been possible for as many as fifteen out of sixty-five members of the Legislature to be nominated by the Governor in order to protect under-represented sections of the community. Since it had been impossible at the Constitutional Conference in 1965 to reach agreement on an alternative procedure, the Banwell Commission had been appointed to make recommendations which would ensure that the main sections of the population should have an opportunity to secure fair representation of their interests. It was not the United Kingdom Government which had demanded that such special arrangements should be made, but the local political parties and especially the minority communities. Under the new electoral arrangements, there would be eight "best loser" seats out of a total of seventy. Four of those would be reserved for under-represented communities irrespective of party considerations, and the other four were intended to restore the balance of party representation in so far as it had been disturbed by the previous award of four seats on a purely communal basis. The arrangement was essentially a compromise. The United Kingdom Government had throughout not wished to impose any solution and the arrangements now in operation had been generally accepted by all sides. His Government had, however, while paying every regard to local wishes, sought to discourage political parties in the Territory from appealing exclusively to particular communities. Sixty out of the seventy members in the new Legislature would be elected in three-member constituencies in which each voter was obliged to cast his full three votes and the result of such an arrangement should be to minimize communal influences. There had, of course, been universal adult suffrage in Mauritius since 1958.

Mr. FOUM (United Republic of Tanzania) said that he would like to make some preliminary comments on the United Kingdom representative's statement. The United Kingdom representative, in attempting to justify the dismemberment of Mauritius and Seychelles, had spoken of distances of many hundreds of miles, but it might be pointed out that the islands in question were many thousands of miles

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from the United Kingdom. That fact showed the extent to which the United Kingdom regarded geographical proximity as a prerequisite for the existence of a nation. At any rate, the islands in question had always been treated as part of Mauritius and Seychelles. If the facts were as the United Kingdom presented them, one could only assume that the United Kingdom had been systematically misleading the United Nations in the information it had been submitting. If that was not the case, the United Kingdom must admit that it was now pursuing a policy incompatible with the United Nations Charter as well as contrary to the wishes of the freedom-loving and peace-loving peoples of Africa and Asia.

The United Kingdom representative had said that military bases were not now being built on the Indian Ocean islands, but the Tanzanian delegation would like to hear it stated that the United Kingdom Government did not intend to place any military installations, equipment or personnel on the islands, since any such installations and personnel could only be intended for aggressive purposes. The establishment by the United Kingdom of military installations in the Indian Ocean must be seen as part of the military strategy of imperialism. The installations were undoubtedly intended for use against peoples engaged in the legitimate struggle for liberation. The United Kingdom had refused to use force where it was justified, to oust Ian Smith's régime in Southern Rhodesia, but was using all the military means at its disposal against the struggling peoples of Aden and other areas. He would like to be told whether or not the United Kingdom had any military personnel or installations, including military transportation facilities, on the islands.

With regard to the reliability of press reports, the question was whether the United Kingdom Government had denied the reports. The Times of London had reported on 25 March 1967 that the United Kingdom was in the final stages of negotiations to buy three privately owned islands in the area for defence purposes. If the United Kingdom Government did not formally deny such reports, his delegation would assume that they were true.

The United Kingdom representative had dwelt at length on the need for the representation of the various communities in Mauritius. The United Kingdom, ever since it had controlled Mauritius, had pursued a systematic policy of isolating one group from another, in accordance with the principle "divide and rule". Now, when the nationalists called for independence, the colonial Power claimed that the people were divided. The electoral system under which each voter would be obliged

to cast three votes was one which had been tried in Tanganyika prior to its independence and had since been discarded. Such a system actually amounted to a denial of the right of vote, as he would show in more detail at a subsequent meeting.

With regard to Seychelles, the United Kingdom had still not indicated that it would accede to the people's demand for independence. "Decolonization" could mean anything, and the Special Committee had seen how the United Kingdom interpreted that term in the case of six Territories in the Caribbean. He would like to be told that under the policy of the United Kingdom Government the people's demand for independence would be granted.

Mr. SHAW (United Kingdom), replying to the remarks of the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, said that that representative had claimed that the islands forming the British Indian Ocean Territory were part of Mauritius and Seychelles, but the only evidence he had adduced was that the islands had formerly been treated as part of Mauritius or of Seychelles for administrative purposes. That was true, but, in his view, irrelevant.

He formally repudiated the Tanzanian representative's unsubstantiated charge that the United Kingdom had misled the United Nations in the information it had provided on the Territories under discussion. The United Kingdom had never withheld any information relevant to the Committee's work, and had indeed gone much further than was strictly required by criteria of relevance. The Tanzanian representative might disbelieve the statements of official United Kingdom spokesmen if he wished, but his counter-assertions had no basis in fact. The matter referred to in the Times report cited by the Tanzanian representative had been dealt with in a statement by the Secretary of State for Defence, on 12 April 1967, who had said that the freehold of the islands in question, which were part of the British Indian Ocean Territory, had been acquired by the Government in order to ensure that they would be available for any facilities, such as refuelling or communications, which the Government might wish to establish there.

The United Kingdom had provided full information on the Territories every year from 1964 onwards. There was little purpose in continually furnishing information if it was to be continually ignored.

Mr. USTINOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he would like to comment on a number of matters touched on by the United Kingdom representative. That representative had asserted that the administering Power was making efforts to diversify the economy of the Territories under discussion. It was clear, however, that any such efforts had been inadequate. There was chronic unemployment on the islands, and skilled workers were obliged to emigrate to find work. In a survey carried out by Barclay's Bank, it had been stated that the United Kingdom had not been vigorous enough in its efforts to help the people of the Territories to help themselves. Basic goods required to meet the essential needs of the people had to be imported.

The United Kingdom representative's claim that his Government's military activities in the area were not impeding the progress of the Territories to independence would not bear examination. Preparation for self-determination must include efforts to build up the economy, and the Secretariat paper (A/AC.109/L.374) showed that military activities were impeding economic development. In paragraph 114 (A/AC.109/L.374/Corr.2) it was stated that, from 1965, the major single source of income in St. Helena had been employment in "communication stations" on Ascension Island - i.e. a military base. Five flax mills which had been in operation in 1965 had been closed down, clearly because the labour force had been lured to the bases by advantages offered them and diverted from normal activities essential for economic independence.

The administering Power had denied that it was dismembering the Territories of Mauritius and Seychelles. Clearly the United Kingdom was ignoring General Assembly resolution 2232 (XXI), which stated unambiguously that any attempt at the disruption of the territorial integrity of colonial Territories and the establishment of military bases and installations there was incompatible with the Purposes and Principles of the Charter and of resolution 1514 (XV).

The representative of the administering Power had cast doubt on the veracity of reports quoted from the United Kingdom Press. He did not think, however, that the United Kingdom delegation could dispute the fact that, on 15 June 1966, the British Prime Minister had indicated that it was his Government's policy to avoid establishing large bases in populated areas and instead to rely on staging posts such as those available in the Indian Ocean, where there was virtually no local population, so that United Kingdom forces could get speedily to where they were needed at minimum cost. That statement spoke for itself.

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The assertion that the islands in question had no population of their own was questionable. The United Kingdom Secretary of State for the Colonies had stated in 1965 that there were 1,400 people living on the islands. The inhabitants certainly did not wish to see their islands handed over to the United Kingdom for use as military bases.

It was asserted that the United Kingdom's military activities were not slowing progress towards independence, and that the local governments had agreed. But the agreement of governments which were not independent could not be considered valid. Under resolution 1514 (XV), self-determination must not be subject to any conditions, and no form of pressure must be exercised on the people. Once independent, the new nations could enter into whatever arrangements they wished.

Mr. PEJIC (Yugoslavia) recalled that his delegation was one of those which had raised the question of the establishment of United Kingdom military bases in the Territories. The United Kingdom representative had once again referred to the statement made on 16 November 1966 by the Secretary of State for Defence that no plan had been made for the creation of military bases in the British Indian Ocean Territory. The Yugoslav delegation did not regard that statement as a categorical denial by the United Kingdom Government, since it left open the possibility of the establishment of such bases in the future. According to the United Kingdom representative, members were basing their views on Press reports, which were often highly speculative. He pointed out, however, that when he had said at the Sub-Committee's 36th meeting that the Indian Government was strongly opposed to the establishment of military bases in the Indian Ocean, he had relied on a statement by a spokesman for that Government.

He regretted that the United Kingdom representative had not deemed it necessary to discuss the points raised in his statement regarding the preoccupation of the political parties in Seychelles with the question of the ultimate status of the Territory. In his delegation's view, that preoccupation meant that the people of Seychelles were not interested in a prolonged process of constitutional evolution. Furthermore, his delegation considered that the changes in the ratio of elected to appointed members of the Executive and Legislative Councils did not represent a significant improvement in the constitutional situation.

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Mr. FOUM (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking in exercise of his right of reply, said that the United Kingdom representative's second statement had served to confirm what he himself had said earlier. The United Kingdom representative had informed members that his Government had been providing information on the new colony only since 1964. However, the Sub-Committee had been in existence for some time before that year. What the Tanzanian delegation wished to call into question, however, was not the transmission of information but the type of information transmitted. If the Territory in question had been a United Kingdom colony, why would that country pay £3 million to Mauritius as compensation for the inclusion of certain of its islands in the "British Indian Ocean Territory"? Colonialism under any guise was a crime against humanity and military aggression was even worse.

At a previous meeting the United Kingdom Government had been called upon to indicate whether its policy was to lead the Territories to independence. The United Kingdom Government had ignored the demand of the people of Seychelles for unfettered independence. In his delegation's view, it was important that the United Kingdom Government should co-operate with the Sub-Committee and the Special Committee and agree to the sending of a visiting mission to Mauritius and Seychelles. It was essential that that Government should renounce its colonial policy in those Territories.

Mr. CHTOUROU (Tunisia) recalled that a recent resolution of the General Assembly had called upon the administering Power to make it possible for the United Nations to send a visiting mission to the Territories under consideration. He stressed that the question of visiting missions was a matter of primary importance and the United Kingdom representative had not given a satisfactory reply in that regard. It was necessary for members to have a clear idea of the United Kingdom Government's position on the possibility of sending a visiting mission to Mauritius and Seychelles for the purpose of ascertaining the situation in those Territories. With regard to Mauritius, the United Kingdom representative had said that a group of observers from the Commonwealth would be invited to be present during the forthcoming elections. But he had said nothing about the Seychelles or St. Helena. In any event, what was of concern to members was the role of the United Nations.

Mr. SHAW (United Kingdom) pointed out that the statement made in Parliament by the Secretary of State for Defence on 16 November 1966 had been in reply to a question concerning the estimated cost of establishing military bases in the British Indian Ocean Territory. The Secretary had said that as no plan had been made for the creation of such bases, he could not give any figure for the cost of such a scheme. The Soviet Union representative had referred to a statement made by the United Kingdom Prime Minister on 16 June 1966. However, a careful reading of that statement would not reveal any inconsistency, since the Prime Minister had spoken of the possibility of establishing facilities for refueling and communications purposes.

With regard to the question of population, he had pointed out that there was no indigenous population in the British Indian Ocean Territory and that most of the people living there were migrant workers. The Soviet representative had again claimed that military activities in the area impeded constitutional development. He himself did not think that that view would be shared by the inhabitants of Malta or Singapore. In any event, his Government was not conducting any military activities in any of the Territories under consideration. The United Kingdom Government had provided a grant of £3 million to Mauritius and, in the case of the Seychelles, had undertaken to build an international airfield, which would contribute greatly to the economic development of the Territory. The Soviet Union representative had referred to figures in the Secretariat Working Paper (A/AC.109/L.374) and had claimed that the solution of unemployment in St. Helena was dependent on military activities. The United Kingdom delegation wished to point out that a total of 342 St. Helenians - as against 323 in 1964 - had worked on Ascension Island in 1965 and that of that total, 150 had been employed by the British Government Cable and Wireless Limited and 68 by the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works for the construction of a British Broadcasting Corporation relay station.

With regard to the Tanzanian representative's remarks concerning the transmission of information by the United Kingdom delegation, he wished to point out that his delegation had always provided full information on the Territories and

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that it was his understanding that the Sub-Committee had first begun to consider Mauritius, the Seychelles and St. Helena in 1964. Since then, his delegation had provided information on those Territories to the Sub-Committee and the Fourth Committee in 1965 and 1966.

His delegation took note of the comments of the Tunisian representative, and his Government would consider any request made by the Sub-Committee as a whole concerning the sending of visiting missions.

Mr. USTINOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said, with regard to the British Government Cable and Wireless Limited, that its activities were not solely concerned with civilian operations. The United Kingdom newspaper, the Observer, had said that the cable was likely to become the main channel for relaying data back to Cape Kennedy. It was obvious that such data would be of a military nature. With regard to St. Helena and Ascension Island, he noted that the United Kingdom and the Republic of South Africa had recently held negotiations concerning the Simonstown naval base. According to a report in the Times, it had been agreed that the United Kingdom would continue to enjoy the right to fly over South Africa in the event of trouble in the Middle East. It was thus clear that those negotiations had been designed to serve the interests of the United Kingdom and to enable that country to hinder the progress of the peoples of the Middle East towards independence.

Mr. FOUM (United Republic of Tanzania) said it was obvious that the representative of the United Kingdom and he were not speaking the same language. The representative of the United Kingdom had said that his Government had made a grant to Mauritius. Yet, according to paragraph 40 of document A/AC.109/L.374, on 20 December 1966, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State had said that the United Kingdom had provided Mauritius with financial aid totalling £8.1 million, in addition to the compensation of £3 million paid for the inclusion of certain groups of its islands in the British Indian Ocean Territory. That showed clearly that the United Kingdom had had to pay for those islands.

Mr. PEJIC (Yugoslavia) said that his delegation continued to hold the view that the statement made by the Secretary of State for Defence did not constitute a denial of any intention on the part of the United Kingdom to establish military bases in the new colony.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.