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Directorate of
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Mauritius: Moderate Government Threatened at Polls

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An Intelligence Memorandum

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ALA 82-10079
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Information available as of 21 May 1982 has been used in the preparation of this report.

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Mauritius: Moderate Government Threatened at Polls

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Summary

The parliamentary election in Mauritius scheduled for 11 June is likely to result in defeat for Prime Minister Ramgoolam's moderate, pro-Western, Labor government at the hands of the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM), a Soviet- and Libyan-supported opposition party. The Movement's appeal is based on its image as the youthful party of change and on the unhappiness of many Mauritians with the unresponsive, corrupt Ramgoolam government and its poor economic performance. 25X1

Public statements by leaders of the Movement leave no doubt that the installation of an MMM government would result in increased Soviet and Libyan influence in Mauritius and the southwest Indian Ocean region at the expense of the United States and the West. The Western powers almost certainly would lose naval and other military access to Mauritius they now enjoy. Though the Soviets might also be denied such access in accordance with the MMM's putative nonaligned stance, they probably would gain influence through the provision of military aid and training.

An MMM regime would attempt to focus international attention on the US military presence on Diego Garcia and would stridently reassert 25X1 Mauritian claims to the archipelago. An MMM regime would join with like-minded neighbors in strongly advocating the Soviet-supported Indian Ocean zone of peace concept and in calls for the withdrawal of all outside forces from the region. 25X1

An MMM regime's attempts to loosen the country's economic ties with the West, however, would be constrained by economic realities. Mauritius is dependent on Western trade, investment, and economic assistance, especially from France. Domestically, the MMM would attempt gradually to socialize the economy, moving cautiously to nationalize key enterprises. It would also attempt to restrict civil liberties, and perhaps try to scrap the Western parliamentary form of government. Mauritius, however, has a long democratic tradition, including a free press, and such a move could result in violence that the MMM might find hard to contain. Should the MMM need the support of its less radical coalition partner, the Mauritian Socialist Party, to form a government, such a coalition would further slow MMM efforts to socialize the economy or institute repressive measures.

Although unlikely, the wily Ramgoolam could still eke out a victory by persuading a former coalition partner to run with Labor in selected districts. A Labor victory would result in the continued preeminence of Western

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political influence in Mauritius, although it probably would also mean increased need for Western aid to keep the economy afloat and avoid unrest. A new Labor government's majority would be small, and it would govern on a day-to-day basis because of the constant threat that its partners would leave the coalition.

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Violence against the US Embassy or individual Americans at the time of the election is possible no matter which side wins.

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Opposition allegations of US interference in the campaign would lead MMM extremists to blame the United States in the event their party lost.

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Mauritius: Moderate Government Threatened at Polls

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Introduction

The leftist Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM), supported by Libya and the Soviet Union, is likely to defeat Prime Minister Ramgoolam's moderate Labor Party in parliamentary elections on 11 June, ending Ramgoolam's 14-year hold on power. Recent polls indicate a big advantage for the MMM, and Labor leaders are very pessimistic about their party's chances. The US Embassy also has reported a definite shift in public mood in favor of the MMM. The MMM has capitalized on the government's out-of-touch image, reputation for corruption, and the country's growing economic difficulties. In the last elections in 1976, the MMM won a plurality, but was denied control of, or participation in, government by Ramgoolam's ability to arrange a coalition with other smaller parties. This time, Ramgoolam has been unable to forge an effective alliance, and the appeal of the MMM has grown as that of Labor has diminished.

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An MMM regime would attempt to alter fundamentally the country's domestic and foreign policies—despite major constraints such as the island's economic dependence on the West—and would work against US strategic interests in the region. An MMM victory probably would lead to the formation of a group of left-leaning Indian Ocean island states that would strongly criticize the US naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

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Should Ramgoolam believe that he faces almost certain defeat, there is an outside chance that he might decide at the eleventh hour to postpone the election or declare a state of emergency—as he did in 1971—and cancel the balloting altogether. Such a move would almost certainly result in serious rioting that could in turn threaten Ramgoolam's ability to hold onto power.

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Alternatively, should the elections result either in the MMM or Labor failing to win a clear victory, differences between coalition partners—such as disputes over the distribution of ministries—could result in the failure of either side to form a government. New elections would then have to be held within a year. This would be likely to be a period of continuous political maneuvering and instability, with a high likelihood of increased foreign meddling in Mauritius's domestic politics.

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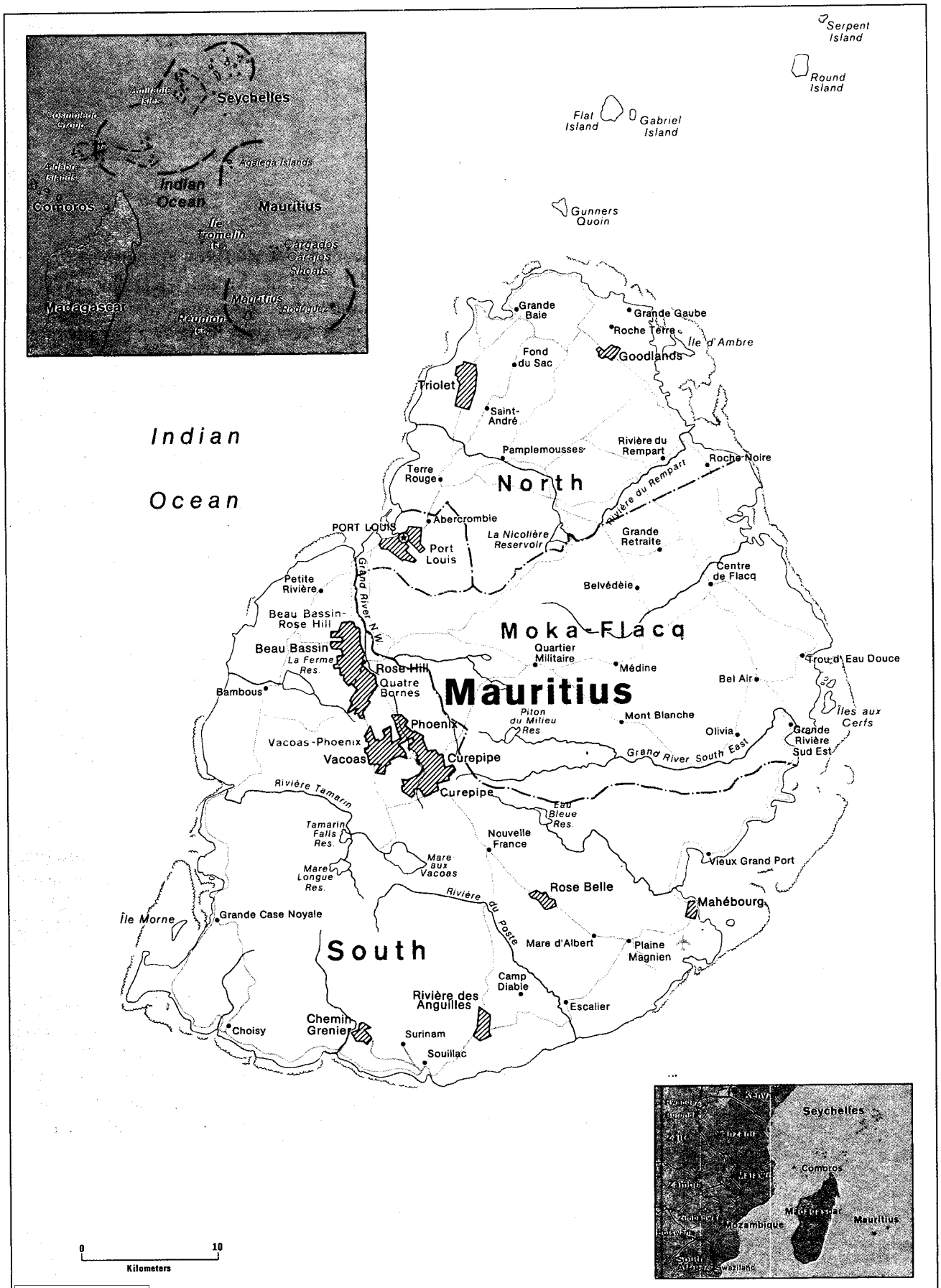

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Table 1

Communal Groups

	Percent of Population	Predominantly Urban or Rural	Primary Occupations
Hindus	52	Rural	Agriculture, Civil Service
Creoles	26	Urban	Dockworkers, Industrial Workers
Muslims	18	Urban	Traders, Industrial Workers
Chinese	3	Urban	Retailers
Franco-Mauritians	2	Urban	Managers, Professionals

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Table 2

The Parties

Parties	Seats Won in 1976 Elections	Major Sources of Communal Support	Political Orientation	Current Electoral Bloc
Labor	27	Hindus	Center	Labor
Progress and Liberty Assembly (RPL)		Creoles	Center	Labor
Mauritian Group [a]		Creole	Center	Labor
Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM)	34	Muslims, Creoles	Radical left	
Mauritian Socialist Party (PSM)		Hindus	Moderate left	MMM
Mauritian Social Democratic Party (PMSD)	8	Creoles	Right	Independent
Mauritian Islamic Party (PIM)		Muslims	Unclear	Unclear
Rodrigues People's Organization (OPR) [c]		Creoles	Left	Independent
Mauritian Democratic Union		Probably Creoles	Center	Independent
Muslim Action Committee (CAM) [d]	1	Muslims	Right	

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[a] Formerly a faction of the Mauritian Social Democratic Party.

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[c] Competing only for the two seats on the island of Rodrigues.
[d] The Muslim Action Committee is not contesting the 1982 elections. Several of its members are running as Labor Party candidates.

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The Contestants

Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM). The MMM is led by 37-year-old Paul Berenger. The US Embassy reports that the party draws most of its support from Mauritius's Muslim and Creole communities, which are concentrated in the urban areas. The Muslim minority, disgruntled youth, and the urban poor and unemployed have been especially receptive to Berenger's calls for nationalizing large sectors of the economy, higher wages, and more equal income distribution. The MMM consistently takes anti-Western and US stances and receives financial and ideological support from the Soviets, Libyans, and leftist nonaligned states. The amounts and channels through which the Soviets provide funding to the MMM are unclear, [redacted] The Libyans more openly provide generous financial aid to the party. The varied means of dispersal make it impossible to determine the exact amount of Libyan aid to the Movement. We doubt that MMM officials know exactly how much Libyan money is flowing into the pockets of party officials. [redacted] 25X1 25X1

The MMM, with its wide range of leftist political thought, resembles a leftwing front more than an orthodox political party. Despite its Marxist orientation, it does not have the rigid hierarchical structure characteristic of orthodox Soviet-style Communist parties. Because of its diverse nature, the MMM suffers from disputes between moderates and its violence-prone radicals. Additionally, we believe that the potential for ethnic factionalism within the party exists. [redacted] some MMM members resent Berenger's unwillingness to accept advice or criticism. We believe that Berenger's political skills will enable him to overcome these problems and that a future MMM government would not be severely hampered by intraparty disputes unless it had a narrow majority. The party has had seven defections from its complement of 34 parliamentarians elected in 1976. With only a small majority Berenger would, in our view, be forced to make concessions to a number of factions, making it extremely difficult for him to govern the country effectively. [redacted] 25X1 25X1

Berenger, who is white, is the party's secretary general and the de facto leader of the MMM. The MMM has announced that Berenger will initially serve as finance minister in an MMM government, but we believe that he will exercise effective power. He is a radical whose political ideas were shaped during the May 1968 riots in Paris and who draws much of his political philosophy from leading thinkers on the French left. The central core of his political thought appears to be the idea of workers' self-management—along the lines of the Yugoslav model. [redacted]

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The group's titular leader and candidate for prime minister is Aneerood Jugnauth, a Hindu, who has taken a backseat to the dynamic Berenger. Based on Jugnauth's comments to US officials, we believe that as Prime Minister in an MMM regime, he may be tempted to become more assertive, especially on issues directly involving the Hindu community. 25X1

As the elections have approached, Berenger has attempted to attract more voters and reassure uneasy businessmen that despite previous MMM rhetoric the Movement will not engage in wholesale nationalizations or legislated wage increases. 25X1

We believe the MMM hopes to capitalize on its fresh image and on the government's poor economic performance. According to a variety of reports, the youthfulness of MMM candidates—11 years younger on average than their Labor counterparts—will appeal to the large number of young voters. The MMM is also gaining from its allegations of US Government involvement on Labor's side in the campaign. 25X1

The MMM's smaller and less radical ally, the Mauritian Socialist Party (PSM), was formed by dissident Labor Party members. The Hindu-based PSM disagrees with the MMM on a number of issues. The PSM has embarrassed the MMM by criticizing Libyan activities in Mauritius. An MMM-dominated government dependent on PSM support would be subject to moderating influences from its coalition partner. 25X1

The Labor Party and Its Allies

The Labor Party, headed by 81-year-old Prime Minister Ramgoolam, relies on the primarily rural Hindu community as its basis of support. The party favors a mixed economy and generally supports Western positions on foreign policy issues. 25X1

Ramgoolam has formed a coalition (the National Alliance Party) which includes the Labor Party; the small Mauritian Group, formerly a faction of the Creole-based Mauritian Social Democratic Party (PMSD); and the Creole-based Progress and Liberty Assembly (RPL). 25X1

The US Embassy reports that Labor's chances of winning the election were badly damaged by delays in forming the coalition and the failure of the PSMD, Labor's traditional coalition partner, to ally itself again with

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Ramgoolám. PMSD leader Gaetan Duval refused to join the Labor coalition this year because he considered the leaders of the less important smaller coalition partners to be challenging his leadership of the Creole community. 25X1

The Labor Party itself is weakened by factionalism, corruption, and the age of its leadership. Embassy and press reporting indicates that Mauritians want change and that Ramgoolam's failure to purge Labor's candidate list of unpopular old-guard members probably deprived the party of its best opportunity to challenge the MMM. 25X1

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Ramgoolam has sought to discredit his opposition by emphasizing the radical nature of the MMM. He has characterized the elections as a struggle between democracy and totalitarianism, and frequently points to the MMM's Soviet and Libyan connections. The government's warning last January to the Libyan "People's Bureau"—the diplomatic mission—to stop interfering in Mauritian internal affairs proved to be an effective campaign move. Most Hindus applauded the action while the MMM alienated some of its Muslim constituency by not speaking out vigorously against the crackdown. 25X1

Labor is concentrating its campaigning in the rural areas, where the Hindus predominate, leaving its coalition partners to contest the MMM in the urban areas. 25X1 25X1 Despite these efforts, the continuing economic decline and Labor's unwillingness to rid itself of unpopular and corrupt candidates will cause many voters to turn to the MMM, according to the US Embassy. In addition, the failure of the PMSD to join the Labor coalition will ensure the opposition's complete dominance in the urban districts, where Creoles and Muslims are the major ethnic groups. 25X1

A Labor loss, in our view, would lead to Ramgoolam's resignation as party leader and a power struggle in the party. We believe that Agriculture Minister Boolell, who has pushed hard for reform of the party, would emerge on top. He would have the support of the new generation of younger and more dynamic party members who probably would be able to push aside the party's "old guard" discredited by the election loss. As Boolell represents the party's moderate right wing, we do not believe the party's orientation would change greatly. 25X1

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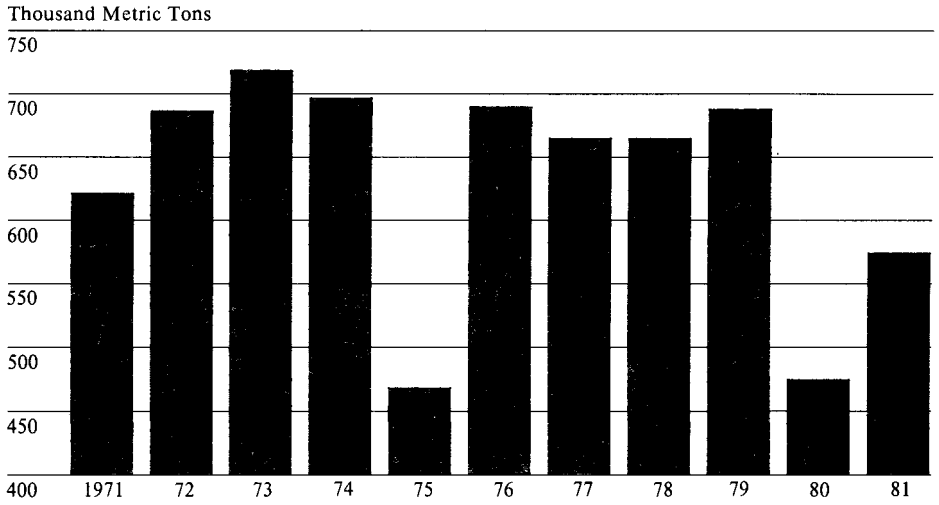
Mauritius: Sugar Production



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Election Issues

The Economy

The current economic slump, marked by double-digit inflation, chronic unemployment, and economic stagnation, has led many Mauritians to support Berenger's socialist policies. Polls indicate that most voters hold Labor responsible for their troubles, even though external forces—bad weather and weak demand for sugar, the island's major export—are in part the culprits. 25X1

The collapse of sugar prices after 1975 and two consecutive bad harvests sent the economy into a tailspin from which it has yet to recover. The government's inability to curb its spending resulted in steadily widening deficits in both the budgetary and international trade accounts. Economic growth slowed dramatically, from 16.6 percent to 2 percent, adding thousands of workers to already swollen unemployment rolls. Meanwhile, inflation rose to 42.7 percent in 1980. 25X1

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The government in recent years has resorted to substantial overseas borrowing—both private and public—including several loans from the International Monetary Fund. The country's international debts rose from $45 million in 1974 to $400 million in 1981, although the debt service ratio is still a low 8 percent. 25X1

More recently Ramgoolam introduced a series of austerity measures—partly in response to IMF demands—to reduce government spending and curb imports. Heading the list was a currency devaluation of almost 17 percent last September. He also reduced a number of consumer subsidies, limited wage increases, and eliminated end-of-the-year salary bonuses for workers. The results of these measures are not yet clear. Any improvement in the economic situation must await the sale of this year's sugar harvest—forecast to be a bumper crop. Weather damage to the last two sugar crops hampered the stabilization impact of previous austerity measures. 25X1

Labor is attempting to limit the political fallout from the restrictive measures and regain the political initiative by the announcement in mid-May of a locally unprecedented unemployment assistance program and a large public works program that would employ 8,000 people. The funds for the latter program are derived from the USAID "Food for Work" agreement. 25X1 We do not believe 25X1 that these stopgap measures will restore Labor's image as a credible and forceful manager of the economy. 25X1

Diego Garcia and the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace

The MMM strongly advocates an Indian Ocean zone of peace, a concept also supported by the Soviets. Consequently, the Western—especially US—military presence in the region has been the subject of MMM criticism. The MMM has also called for a ban on naval visits to Port Louis by non-Indian Ocean powers. This contrasts with the Ramgoolam government's policy of encouraging visits by foreign navies and Ramgoolam's quiet support for the Western military presence in the region. 25X1

MMM attacks on the Western military presence center on the US military use of Diego Garcia, which was part of preindependence Mauritius. With strong Soviet encouragement, the MMM calls for Mauritian sovereignty over the island and the dismantling of the US military facilities. Berenger

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charges that Ramgoolam illegally gave away the island to the British in return for economic assistance and early independence.[1] Ramgoolam periodically issues *pro forma* calls for Mauritian sovereignty over Diego Garcia to blunt the MMM campaign, but privately he has told US officials he takes comfort in the US military presence on the island. [redacted] 25X1

Ramgoolam has managed to quiet the opposition on the Diego Garcia issue by obtaining US agreement for the use of some Mauritian labor on Diego Garcia. Even the MMM was unwilling to criticize directly anything that eased the island's unemployment problems. Although Ramgoolam lost some political ground when a US firm rather than a Mauritian concern was awarded a contract for construction materials used on Diego Garcia, the government's success in resolving the contentious matter of the displaced inhabitants of Diego Garcia has deprived the MMM of a major election issue. Ramgoolam and the United Kingdom recently agreed to compensate the 1,200 Diego Garcians, who were resettled on Mauritius in 1971 to make room for military construction, with almost $8 million and some land in Mauritius in exchange for renouncing further financial claims against London and Port Louis. [redacted] 25X1

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Foreign Policy Implications

The USSR

An MMM victory would be a political victory for the Soviets, shifting Mauritius from a pro-Western to a nonaligned or even pro-Soviet position in international forums. [redacted] 25X1 Based on MMM rhetoric, however, Moscow has reason to believe that an MMM regime would deny the Western powers the limited, though useful, military access they now enjoy on Mauritius. An MMM regime would be a valuable ally in Moscow's campaign for an Indian Ocean zone of peace and against the US military presence on Diego Garcia. [redacted] 25X1

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An MMM government would quickly establish warm relations with Moscow, but its support for Soviet positions probably would not come cheaply. [redacted] We do not believe the Soviets would be willing to 25X1

[1] Mauritius ceded the Chagos Archipelago (a group of islands including Diego Garcia) to the United Kingdom in 1965 in return for $7.2 million in development aid. The terms of the transfer of Diego Garcia remain in dispute. Ramgoolam, the principal Mauritian official in the negotiations, claims he was forced to cede the island to hasten Mauritian independence. [redacted] 25X1

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provide large-scale hard currency aid in view of Moscow's own economic problems. Based on past practice, we believe the Soviets are more likely to provide military equipment and training, the most important source of Soviet influence in much of the Third World. 25X1

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Ramgoolam has long kept Moscow at arm's length. Soviet poaching in the fishing grounds off Mauritius led him to decide against renewing a fisheries agreement with the USSR. Soviet fishing, merchant, research, and naval vessels do call at Port Louis, however, and the Soviets are considering the use of Mauritian drydocking facilities for their fishing vessels. 25X1

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Libya

In addition to funding the MMM, the Libyans have actively and openly proselytized among the island's Muslim minority, many members of which are unhappy with the community's underrepresentation in government and the professions. 25X1

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These efforts have struck a responsive chord among young Muslims, many of whom have flocked to the MMM, according to US Embassy sources. 25X1

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The government circulated a communique last September warning foreign missions against interference in Mauritian internal affairs, a move widely interpreted by diplomats and, according to US Embassy sources, by much of the populace, as anti-Libyan. Early this year the government specifically warned the Libyan diplomatic mission to stop interfering in Mauritian internal affairs. 25X1

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We believe that under an MMM government the Libyans probably would work harder and with greater success to undermine US and Western influence in Mauritius and the region. Last year the Libyan mission distributed anti-US leaflets on the Diego Garcia issue during the visit of a US naval ship.

Cuba

There is little known Cuban activity in Mauritius at present. Our judgment, based on past Cuban performance is that an MMM regime would receive help in reorganizing the security services from the Cubans. 25X1 We believe that Havana would follow its practice of sending medical teams or teachers to Mauritius and providing schooling in Cuba for Mauritian students. 25X1

France and Other West European Countries

Mauritius has close ties with Western Europe, especially France and the United Kingdom. Paris probably has the broadest overall interest in preserving Mauritius as a friend of the West. The US Embassy in Port Louis believes that an MMM regime would be likely to call, unsuccessfully, for Paris to decolonize Reunion—a nearby island that is a department of France and the site of important French military facilities—and cede Tromelin, another nearby island, to Mauritius. We believe that an MMM government, in line with the Indian Ocean zone of peace concept, probably would also call for the removal of French military forces from the area and would include French ships in its ban on calls by foreign navies. 25X1

Mauritius's declining economic situation leads us to believe that these demands on France would be muted, however, by the MMM's hopes for continued support from Paris. France is the largest single donor of economic assistance to Mauritius, providing approximately $15 million per year, and is Mauritius's third-largest trade partner. The presence of an important Franco-Mauritian minority and the prevalence of French culture also would be likely to encourage continued strong ties with France.

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British influence is also strong on Mauritius. The Queen of England is the formal head of state, Mauritius is a member of the British Commonwealth, and the United Kingdom is Mauritius's largest trading partner. In 1976 the United Kingdom and Mauritius extended postindependence agreements that placed British technical advisers in several Mauritian ministries, and the British have provided training for the security forces. In addition, British capital developed Mauritian irrigation and port facilities. The proposed agreement on compensation for the displaced Diego Garcians will remove the thorniest issue between the United Kingdom and the Labor government. 25X1

Mauritius also has important economic ties with the European Economic Community (EC). A quota agreement, presently under renegotiation, provided for the sale of 500,000 tons of sugar—the bulk of the country's crop—to the EC at prices that were, except in 1980, well above world market levels. 25X1

United States

The US military and strategic interest in Mauritius is significant, though limited. Port Louis is one of the few ports in the southwest Indian Ocean that are accessible to US ships and suitable for rest and relaxation of crews. 25X1

Mauritius is the only remaining democratic, pro-Western island state in the area. It supports US positions in international meetings, and has often played a moderating role in contentious debates affecting US interests. We believe an MMM regime would reverse this and pave the way for more concerted attacks on US and Western policies by the island states acting as a group. 25X1

Mauritius depends on the United States to purchase a large portion of the sugar crop that remains after fulfilling the EC quota and domestic needs. Mauritius may have as much as 130,000 tons to put on the world market if this year's crop is up to expectations. Mauritian officials are now upset by the recent imposition of a sugar quota by the United States. The United States has sharply increased food aid in recent years; agreements for 1982 provide for $3.5 million in concessional sales of food and a food-for-work program based on a $2 million grant. A proposed extension of $2 million in US economic support funds for Mauritius is pending. 25X1

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India 25X1

Relations between Mauritius and India traditionally have been close as a result of cultural, religious, and political affinities. Approximately two-thirds of all Mauritians are of Indian descent. [redacted] The US Embassy in New Delhi reports that India badly wants to lay the groundwork for good relations with a future MMM government despite New Delhi's apprehension about the party's radical nature and the possible decline in the Hindu community's influence under an MMM government. [redacted] 25X1

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China

China hosted a high-level Mauritian Government delegation late last year. We believe Beijing's motivation was its desire to improve Labor's election prospects with Mauritius's small but influential Chinese minority. This strongly suggests that Beijing supports the Ramgoolam regime as an obstacle to increased Soviet influence in the southwest Indian Ocean. [redacted] 25X1

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Other Indian Ocean States and South Africa

Despite officially adhering to sanctions by the Organization of African Unity against Pretoria, Mauritius is heavily dependent economically on South Africa, its second most important trading partner. South Africa buys a large portion of Mauritius's tea crop and supplies about 20 percent of Mauritius's imports, including much of its food. [redacted] we believe Pretoria has discreetly helped offset some of Labor's campaign costs. Should the MMM come to power, Berenger will be on guard against a South African–backed coup attempt. We believe that the unsuccessful coup attempt late last November against the leftist regime in Seychelles—and the mercenary-led installation of a conservative government in Comoros several years ago—has heightened Berenger's fears. [redacted] 25X1

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Fear of South Africa also would serve as an incentive for an MMM government to cooperate with the leftist regimes in Madagascar and Seychelles, which feel similarly threatened. [redacted]

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Berenger has said that he and Seychelles President Rene are especially close and we believe the two are likely to join Madagascar in promoting the Indian Ocean zone of peace in international forums. 25X1

Election Results: Implications for the United States

Labor's unresponsive image, its difficulty in organizing a coalition, the island's continuing economic decline, and the widely perceived need for change point to a likely MMM victory. Polls indicate that there is a good chance the Movement will win an outright majority in the Legislative Assembly, thereby freeing the party from any dependence on its ally, the smaller Socialist Party. 25X1

MMM Controls Parliament

Soviet prospects in Mauritius under an MMM government would definitely improve. We believe that Berenger probably would establish an army, which Mauritius now lacks, and that he would be likely to seek Soviet equipment and training.

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In addition, we believe an MMM government would sign fishing and cultural accords with Moscow. 25X1

Past statements by MMM leaders suggest also that an MMM government would almost certainly end foreign military access to Mauritius. Berenger is a strong nationalist who would not want to prejudice his claims to nonalignment and who probably would include the USSR in his ban on foreign military access. In the near term it is unlikely he would grant them any exceptions unless he believed his regime to be seriously threatened by outside powers or by domestic unrest. 25X1

An MMM government, according to its leaders' announced plans, would pursue a radical nonaligned policy that would generally coincide with Soviet goals and interests. The MMM would support Soviet efforts to promote the Indian Ocean zone of peace concept and would intensify demands for the United Kingdom to return Diego Garcia and for an end to the US military presence. 25X1

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Both Madagascar and Seychelles receive substantial Western aid, however, and we believe they may be reluctant to offend present and potential Western benefactors. For

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example, a Malagasy official told US Embassy officers that President Ratsiraka was trying to avoid offending France because of its sizable aid to Madagascar. 25X1

We believe that Libya would try to persuade the new government to sever, or at least curtail, relations with the United States. Nonetheless, the MMM would probably try to limit Libyan activities in Mauritius, recognizing that the issue of Libyan influence could disrupt the island's delicate ethnic and religious relations. 25X1

Statements by MMM members indicate that Berenger would establish good relations with Yugoslavia—as one of the founders of the nonaligned movement—and other "progressive" Third World nations such as Zimbabwe, Algeria, and India. 25X1 25X1

Although the French Government appears to favor Labor, the US Embassy in Paris reports that the MMM has a number of supporters among French socialist leaders, and we believe Berenger would look to them to help in eliciting political and economic support. Like leaders in Seychelles and Madagascar, which receive French financial assistance, Berenger might be reluctant to upset Paris should it come through with a sizable aid package. 25X1

Domestically, it is our view that an MMM regime probably would move to restrict civil liberties, including freedom of the press, if significant opposition to MMM programs developed. We believe Berenger also may be planning to alter the Mauritian form of government because he has said that Western-style parliamentary systems are not "democratic." Mauritius has a long tradition of political participation and a vigorous press, however, and any attempt to stifle civil liberties could touch off violent demonstrations. 25X1

An MMM government would have trouble reviving Mauritius's sluggish economy. Berenger is unlikely to introduce radical economic changes immediately because sweeping nationalization of sugar and other industries would risk discouraging vital Western investment and financial assistance. His most likely course of action will be a program of selective takeovers. 25X1

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MMM in Coalition

Should the MMM fail to win a parliamentary majority and have to depend on Socialist Party support to form a government, Berenger's ability to implement his programs would be limited. The two parties thus far have submerged their differences but trouble probably would resurface in a coalition. The PSM is basically a communal party that in large part represents liberal Hindu interests. PSM officials have indicated that they would see an increase in Libyan influence in Mauritius or a disproportionate role for Muslims in a new government as a threatening development. 25X1

25X1

We believe that a marked increase in Soviet influence in Mauritius, especially a large number of Soviet advisers, or the institution of repressive measures would also lead the PSM to withdraw from a future government, possibly causing the government to collapse. 25X1

Should a future MMM-PSM government fall, we believe the MMM would be tempted to declare martial law to remain in power. In our view such a move would be strongly resisted by the majority Hindu community, which would see a threat to the democratic process as a challenge to Hindu influence, and by rightwing elements of the Creole population. 25X1

Defections from Berenger's own party could also cause the fall of a future MMM government; of the 34 MMM deputies elected in 1976, seven have left the party. The MMM suffers from disputes between party radicals and moderates and from unhappiness with Berenger's unwillingness to accept advice and criticism. 25X1

Labor Forms a Government

If the MMM wins a plurality of the votes rather than a majority, as it did in 1976, Ramgoolam, as current Prime Minister, would have the constitutional prerogative to try to form a coalition. It is possible that he could do this with a razor thin majority. Such a new and insecure Labor government would seek generous Western economic aid to keep the economy afloat and to avoid the serious disorders that would probably accompany increased economic hardship. Realizing these dangers, Ramgoolam, in our view, is likely to attempt to elicit more from the West in return for maintaining his benign neutrality and for facilitating US naval access. He recently approached the United States with a request for $30 million in economic assistance. 25X1

A Labor victory probably would result in violence by MMM radicals. MMM allegations of US interference in the campaign increase the likelihood of violence directed against US citizens or the US Embassy

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should Ramgoolam carry the day. The MMM may even have contingency plans to seize power if Ramgoolam were to survive, though we have no evidence indicating this to be the case. The Libyans have been rumored to be storing arms in the Seychelles for the MMM, according to the US Embassy in Seychelles. 25X1

Even without MMM-inspired troubles, however, a Labor coalition would be inherently unstable. Its narrow majority would give the smaller parties disproportionate influence and factionalism would be aggravated by increased maneuvering among aspirants for Ramgoolam's position. 25X1

Ramgoolam, however, might use a victory—however narrow—as a face-saving opportunity to step down in the interest of rejuvenating the party. His most likely successor, Agriculture Minister Boolell, is widely viewed in the Labor Party as its most acceptable leader, and probably would continue Ramgoolam's policies. 25X1

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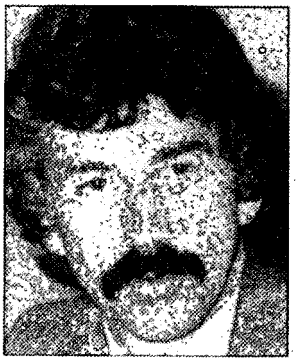
Key Leaders

Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam

Ser Caption

A former physician, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam has been parliamentary leader of the Mauritian Labor Party since 1948 and Prime Minister since independence in 1968. He is regarded affectionately by many Mauritians as the architect of independence. Ramgoolam views himself as a socialist in the British Labor Party mold and is one of Africa's most moderate leaders. His ability to compromise has enabled him to survive numerous political challenges but he also has been criticized for failing to make hard decisions regarding the island's economic and social problems.

The son of indentured Indian immigrants, Ramgoolam, a Hindu, was born in 1900. In 1921 he traveled to the United Kingdom to study medicine. There he took an interest in politics and developed a strong belief in British socialism.



Paul Raymond Berenger

Le Mauricien

Paul Berenger, a young, leftwing political activist who studied in France and the United Kingdom has led the oppositionist Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM) since he founded it in 1969. As Secretary General of the MMM Berenger has sought power through the labor union movement and elections.

25X1

Berenger left Mauritius in 1963 to study journalism at the University of Paris. There he was attracted to socialist ideas and participated in the May 1968 student unrest. During the summer of 1968 he returned to Mauritius and founded the Club of Militant Students of Mauritius, which later became the Mauritian Militant Movement. In 1971 the government detained Berenger because of his "confrontation politics." Berenger, the son of a wealthy Franco-Mauritian plantation owner, was born in 1945.

25X1

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Aneerood Jugnauth

Le Mauricien

Aneerood Jugnauth, President of the Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM) since 1974 and leader of the opposition in the Legislative Assembly since 1977, is his party's shadow Prime Minister. He has few strong ideological beliefs and is viewed as a stalking horse for MMM Secretary General Paul Berenger. Jugnauth, who visited the United States in August 1981, has stated that if he wins the elections the MMM will maintain good relations with Washington. A Hindu, Jugnauth was born in 1930. He is a lawyer and studied in the United Kingdom.

25X1

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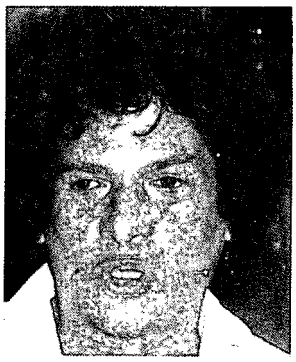
Harish Boodhoo.

Le Mauricien

An educator by training, Harish Boodhoo is a founding member of the left-of-center Mauritian Socialist Party (PSM). He and two other Labor Party dissidents established the PSM in 1979, a few months after they were expelled from the Labor Party because of their campaign to rid Labor of its corrupt leadership and return the party to stricter socialist principles. In March 1981 the PSM formed a coalition with the Mauritian Militant Movement to enhance the election prospects of both parties. Despite his socialist beliefs, Boodhoo is generally pro-Western. Boodhoo, a Hindu, was born in 1944.



Sir Charles Gaetan Duval

Ser Caption

Gaetan Duval, one of Mauritius's most experienced and erratic politicians and former Foreign Minister (1969-73), has led the Mauritian Social Democratic Party (PMSD) since 1966. He originally opposed independence for the island in 1968 because he believed it would lead to Hindu domination of the government at the expense of his fellow Creoles. He eventually tempered his views, however, and in 1969 joined a coalition government as a cabinet member. This alliance ended in 1973 when Duval's lobbying for the establishment of a French naval base in Mauritius failed. Following the 1976 parliamentary elections the PMSD rejoined a coalition government, but Duval again withdrew his party from the government in June 1981 after a power struggle with a PMSD faction that opposed his leadership Duval was born in 1930 and studied law in London and Paris.

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