

# MALDIVE "REBEL" RULER WELCOMES BRITONS

## ISLANDS' PROSPERITY RESTS SOLELY ON N.A.A.F.I.

From JOHN RIDLEY,  
Daily Telegraph Special Correspondent

GAN, Maldives, Tuesday.

**D**ISCONTENT is growing in the Maldives, the atolls 500 miles south-west of Ceylon in the Indian Ocean, over the establishment of the R.A.F. staging post on Gan island. The base is nearing completion and will come into use next year.

To-day, a group of British Commonwealth and international correspondents were flown from Ceylon to Gan, which hitherto has been an officially banned area to all journalists despite

innumerable applications to visit a place on which more than £4½ million is being spent by the British Government.

After landing we were hurried to a pier where lay three or four 10-man rowing boats. They were flying the blue, green and red flag of the newly created Government of the United Suvadive Islands, the three atolls which have broken away from official Maldivian Government in Male, which is recognised by Britain as sovereign over all the Maldives.

Rowers chanting some old Maldivian boating song pulled us over a choppy sea to the neighbouring island of Fedu, where we were greeted on the beach by large numbers of inhabitants in their best clothes.

The economy of the new Government of the United Suvadive Islands is entirely based on the Naafi. Workers on Gan are all paid in sterling and paid much better than ever before. They are permitted Naafi facilities, giving them a standard of living undreamt of in the past.

### MET BY "PRESIDENT"

#### Statement in English

In a marquee we were formally introduced to Badullah Afif Didi, "President of the Republic." He is a slim Cairo-educated man of 43 who promptly produced for us a long statement written in impeccable English, which he does not speak.

It began: "The people of the U.S.I. are very happy that you have come from distant places to see for yourselves how we are living our lives free from the tyranny of the Male Government, under which we suffered for centuries."

### BRITONS WELCOME

#### Protection Valued

He welcomed the presence of Britons in Addu, part of which is Fedu, as they were welcomed during the last war. "Our people have lived under British protection for the last 70 years and we hope that this will be continued.

"We have not taken any part in discussions about the lease for the R.A.F. base on Gan. The British Government has negotiated with the Male Government, who have no authority to speak for us.

"Any negotiations must be held with our representatives, as Gan is part our territory and only our people can make arrangements concerning them.

"The construction of the airfield on Gan has brought great prosperity to our people. For the first time in history, employment is available, we get regular food supplies, we receive medical aid when necessary, and a new way of life is open to us. Can you wonder that we are determined to keep our independence?"

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