

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL
OF SOUTH AFRICA.

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OFFICE OR INDIVIDUAL	SUBJECT
<p>From Secretary of State Confidential 1926 3rd November</p>	<p>TRISTAN DA CUNHA. Removal of the inhabitants of and the formation of a settlement in the Union: copies of correspondence between the S. of S. and General Hertzog regarding.</p>
<p>PREVIOUS PAPERS 22/106</p>	<p>MINUTES <i>1. Min. for information.</i> <i>30/12</i> <i>R.H.</i> <i>30/12/26</i></p>
<p>SUBSEQUENT PAPERS 22/108</p>	

120.
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COPY.

Claridge's.

Brook Street, W.1.

12th November, 1926.

My dear Harding,

On the 28th October Colonel Amery wrote to General Hertzog regarding the reopening of the subject of the possible removal of some of the inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha to the Union.


General Hertzog has again gone into the matter in the light of the memo which accompanied Col. Amery's letter and asks me to say that on his return to the Union he is quite prepared to reopen the subject with the object of forming a community settlement for these islanders in the Union.

Will you please inform Colonel Amery of this.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd) H. Gordon Watson.

H. J. Harding Esq., C.B., C.M.G.,



number of the inhabitants are willing to leave the Island; and if so, what would be the minimum number of Islanders whom the Union Government would consider it worth while to receive as a body, and to make provision for. It would be convenient also to know whether it may be understood that there would be no difficulty about the admission to South Africa of individual emigrants from Tristan and whether they could be given assistance to find employment.



contents of the reports and that "in view of the opinion expressed by Dr. Marshall that the removal of the Islanders is impracticable for the reasons mentioned by him, Ministers presume that there is no occasion for their pursuing the matter any further at present."

Although the reports received from the Captain and Ship's Surgeon of the R.R.S. "Discovery" would seem to show that there is no immediate necessity, on the score of hardship and privation, for the removal of any of the inhabitants, Captain Stenhouse reported that, according to information received, some of the inhabitants wished to leave; and the Chaplain of H.M.S. "Dublin", which visited the Island in 1923, expressed the view that pressure should be brought to bear on the younger people to emigrate.


It is established that the population of the Island is increasing, and the need for some facilities for emigration is likely to become progressively greater. It would seem desirable therefore that with the commencement, as is hoped, of a more regular means of communication with the Island, the possibility of obtaining an outlet for those Islanders willing to emigrate should not be lost sight of. It would be useful in the circumstances to know whether the Union Government would be prepared to continue the consideration of the question on the lines suggested by Mr. Rogers. should it be found that in practice a sufficient
number



"Discovery", which called at Tristan da Cunha on 30th January, 1926, which gave a more favourable account of conditions on the Island than that received from the late Rev. Mr. Rogers. Captain Stenhouse, while intimating that the food resources of the Island could with advantage be developed, stated that the idea "that the Islanders are on the verge of starvation" is "entirely false," and that the "majority of the Islanders are cheerful, hard-working and contented." He added, however, that he had been informed that some of the inhabitants wished to leave the Island.

The Ship's Surgeon, Lieutenant-Colonel E. H. Marshall, D.S.O., similarly reported that "the appearance of the Islanders did not suggest that they were suffering from the effects of shortage of food, but on the other hand there were no signs of over-feeding. The men have good physique and are above the average height. The women appeared superior to the men." His conclusions were that the population of the Island (141 on 1st February 1926) is increasing and is likely to continue to do so; that the health of the community is good; and that "for one reason or another the older Islanders will never leave the Island of their own free will and the younger ones have little or no opportunity of leaving however much they desire to do so."

Copies of these reports were communicated to the Union Government and on 1st September 1926 the Governor General's Deputy transmitted a Minute from Ministers stating that they had noted the



such a scheme on the basis indicated by Mr. Rogers. I enclose, for the information of your Ministers, copies of two letters received recently from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and also copies of two memoranda regarding the proposed emigration scheme, which have been prepared by Mr. Rogers."

Copies of Mr. Rogers' Memorandum and Draft of an Emigration Scheme were enclosed. (Copies annexed.)

The Governor General replied on the 5th of December 1925, transmitting a minute from Ministers in the following terms:-
"Minute No.1032.

With reference to His Excellency the Governor General's minute No.22/66 of 22nd July 1925, regarding the future of Tristan da Cunha, MINISTERS have the honour to inform His Excellency that they have had under favourable consideration the question of the provision of land for such of the Islanders as may desire to leave the Island, and that matters have progressed so far that an inspection of certain land at Sans Bay, in the division of Caledon, Cape Province, will now take place, with a view to ascertaining whether the land and environment will be suitable for the purpose of the suggested community settlement.

MINISTERS hope to be in a position in the near future to acquaint His Excellency of the result of this investigation. (Signed) J.B.M.HERTZOG."


Subsequently, reports were received from the Captain and the Ship's Surgeon of the R.R.S. "Discovery"



has to be diverted far from any ordinary trade route at considerable expense, and cannot be relied upon in the future; (b) the urgent necessity of taking half the present population off the Island, and settling them in South Africa, preferably as a community settlement.

Mr. Rogers stated that he discussed the question of evacuating a portion of the inhabitants with the Tristan da Cunha Committee in Cape Town, and also with your Prime Minister, and that he understood that the latter would be prepared to consider sympathetically a scheme of community settlement on the sea coast if His Majesty's Government would share the expense of removing the islanders and re-establishing them in South Africa.


Although previous attempts made in 1904 and 1907 to arrange for the removal of the Islanders to the Cape were unsuccessful owing to the unwillingness of the inhabitants to move, I feel that with the steady increase which is taking place in the population the position on the Island is now such that there may be good reason for supposing that the views of many of the Islanders on this point may have changed. In the circumstances I should be glad to know whether your Ministers agree that a renewed attempt should be made to obtain the removal of as large a portion as possible of the population to South Africa and would be prepared to assist in such



Racially the Islanders are of mixed origin, partly British, partly Italian, and partly negroid. The Island contains 2,000 acres of arable land of poor quality. There is no timber, and practically no indigenous vegetation other than a few juniper bushes. Mr. Rogers took out with him a number of seeds provided by the authorities at Kew, but they all failed. It is impossible to grow corn, and the inhabitants are dependent upon the potato crop and upon the flesh of sea-birds and their eggs. Fishing is only possible during the less stormy months, namely between the middle of January and the middle of April. The Islanders are, therefore, dependent upon charitable assistance sent by the Tristan da Cunha Committee in England and by the Committee at Cape Town, for the necessaries of life. One of the outstanding difficulties on the Island is the plague of rats which swarm everywhere. The physical condition of the inhabitants is thoroughly bad, a very large proportion suffering from dysentery and intestinal parasites.

Mr. Rogers is definitely of opinion that the Island is over-populated and cannot support more than about 50 or 60 persons without severe privations. In his opinion the outstanding needs are (a) the visit of a warship or commercial steamer at least once a year, which would have to be arranged to arrive at Tristan da Cunha in February or March on account of weather conditions. Commercial shipping

has



arrange for a periodical call by one of their steamships on the Durban-S.America service, at a charge of £150 per call, cargo to be charged at the rate of 40/- per ton, and it is hoped that the first call under these conditions will be made during the first three months of next year. The cost will be borne by the Imperial Treasury.

As regards question (b), it was long felt that the evacuation of the Island was desirable but previous attempts made in 1904 and 1907 to arrange for the removal of the Islanders failed, owing to their unwillingness to leave. More recently, the question was again raised on the return of the late Rev. H.M. Rogers after a stay of three years in the Island. Mr. Rogers was accorded an interview with the Hon. W. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., at which he urged the necessity of removing half the present population and produced an outline of a scheme of emigration. The substance of his statements were embodied in a despatch from the Secretary of State to the Governor General of the Union of South Africa, the relevant portion of which read as follows:-

"The Reverend H.Martyn Rogers, who has recently returned from a three years sojourn on the Island, has been accorded an interview in this Department, and has explained the existing conditions on the Island. The following is a summary of the statement which he made.

There are now on the Island 140 persons, including approximately 30 married families.

Racially

Memorandum on the subject of Tristan da Cunha.

The problem with regard to Tristan da Cunha, which has exercised the consideration of successive Secretaries of State, consists mainly of two questions:- (a) the question of arranging for more frequent communication with the Island, and (b) that of the removal of all or some of the inhabitants.

As regards question (a), during the latter part of the last century, an annual visit was made to the Island by one of H.M.'s Ships from the Africa Station. These regular visits were discontinued after the South African War. Since then, calls have been made at rare intervals by one or other of H.M.'s Ships or when an opportunity has occurred otherwise; e.g. the visit in the early months of this year of the R.R.S. "Discovery" en route to the whaling waters of South Georgia. After the visit of H.M.S. "Dublin" in March 1923, the question of an annual visit by a warship was revived, and correspondence passed between the Colonial Office and the Admiralty on the subject. The Commander-in-Chief of the Africa Station reported, however, that apart from the question of expense, such a visit was not practical so long as there were only two cruisers on the Station. It was then decided to approach all the shipping companies who might have been able to arrange for a periodical call at the Island by one of their vessels, with the result that only Messrs. A. Weir and T. & J. Harrison were able to make a definite offer. These companies have offered to

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assist some of the Islanders to emigrate. As you know
Tristan da Cunha has many friends both in this country
and South Africa and I should mention that the King has
always taken a special personal interest in its affairs.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd) L.S. Amery.

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a definite offer. These companies have offered to

arrange

Downing Street,

28th October, 1926.

My dear General,

You may perhaps remember that official correspondence has recently been proceeding on the subject of the possible removal of some of the inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha, and the formation of a community settlement for them in the Union.

The last communication on the subject conveyed a minute from Ministers to the effect that, in view of the reports on the condition of the islanders, received from the Captain and Ship's Surgeon of the R.R.S. "Discovery", they presumed that no further action need be taken at present.

Before it is decided to abandon the proposed scheme I should be very glad if you would consider the enclosed memorandum which I have had prepared and if you could let me have your views on the points raised in the last paragraph.

We had been inclined here to think, in view of the reports we have received, that an attempt might be made
to

two cruisers on the Station. It was then decided to approach all the shipping companies who might have been able to arrange for a periodical call at the Island by one of their vessels, with the result that only Messrs. A. Weir and T. & J. Harrison were able to make a definite offer. These companies have offered to

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RECD G.G.O.
29 DEC 1926
22/107

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Downing Street,

CONFIDENTIAL

3 December, 1926.

My Lord,

22/106
To General Hertzog
28th October
Memorandum.

With reference to my despatch No. 397 of
even date regarding the possible removal of some of
the inhabitants of Tristan da Cunha and the formation
of a community settlement for them in the Union I
have the honour to transmit to Your Excellency, for your
information, the accompanying copy of the corres-
pondence with General Hertzog on the subject.

Fr Mr. Gordon
Watson 12th
November.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

humble servant,

J. Amery

GOVERNOR GENERAL,
HIS EXCELLENCY,
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE,
THE EARL OF ATHLONE, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., F.S.O.,
etc., etc., etc.,

Copy sent to Ministers ✓
For information
Minute No. 22/107 CONFIDENTIAL
Date 30 December, 1926.

(Signed) ATHLONE