

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF
SOUTH AFRICA

No. 33 / 2007

OFFICE OR INDIVIDUAL

From:

Max Erni,
Basle, Switzerland.

DATE

1937

3rd December.

SUBJECT

HEALTH: GENERAL.
TRISTAN DA CUNHA.

Claims to have invented effective rat poison,
and offers services to Union Government for purpose
of exterminating rats on Tristan da Cunha.

PREVIOUS PAPERS

*Heck. → send to Minister for
disposal.*

SD 20/12

SUBSEQUENT PAPERS

No.
33/2007

killing mixture, please let me know it, or if You prefer, I would be ready to demonstrate the mixture in some ratinvaded place in the London harbour and You could get the testimonials right from British authorities.

Dear Sir, if You think my scheme is worth to be considered, please let me know the details of the conditions on Tristan da Cunha, the surface and an approximate estimation of the number of rats living there and I shall be able to make You a more concrete offer for this undertaking.

Very respectfully Yours,

(Sgd.) MAX ERNI.

Max Erni,
Thiersteinerallee 64,
Basle,
SWITZERLAND.

Original
Copy sent to Ministers
For Disposal
Minute No. 33/2007
Date 20th December, 1937.

(Sgd.) PATRICK DUNCAN

dumping places. We have made the experience that we had to use about one pound of bite to kill approximately one thousand rats on these local dumping places. Of course I might have to use a little more if the rats are spread over a whole country and are not confined to a more or less small place. On the other hand I have also made the experience that my mixture is so very hard tickling the rats' nozzles that on holding it close to ratholes the beasts are liable to come right out trying to snatch it right out of ones hands. For other animals like cats & dogs & cattle it has been proved to be absolute harmless.

In addition to the cost of the mixture which quantity I would need, I think You are in a better position to guess at according to the number of rats, if they amount to 10 or 100 of thousands or even to millions and according to the surface of the territory. My salary would be composed of a weekly or monthly allowance besides my expenses (fare) and on returning to Cape Town after a successful rat-killing of a Premio of a few 100 pounds, the exact amount of which could be fixed yet if You dear Sir should decide to get in further correspondence with me and would give me Your confidence and order.

As a personal reference I want to mention Mr. Douglas Young, Thiersteinerallee 55, Basle. Mr. Young is the British Consul of our City, an honorary patron of the Anglo-Swiss Club of Basle of which ^{Club} I am also a member. If You desire governmental testimonials of the effectiveness of my rat-killing

hours or 5 as some of the animals have got a very tough life. With this mixture I am able of destroying thousands of rats a day under normal conditions, that is, if the invaded places for my daily work are not too far apart.

As my knowledge of the islands is only limited I can not say beforehand how long it would take me to clean the whole country. As much as I know does the mainisland cover about a hundred square miles and rises in some places up to around 5000 to 6000 feet height. Of course I would have to engage a few helpers on the island so we could work systematically and attack the rats from different places so they would not have a chance to dislodge from one settlement to another. Of course my bite is not of a unismelle so that we could use one kind of bite for a day or two, and then if we see that the killed rats are getting less numerous caused by distrust of the rats towards this attractive but deadly food, we could use a 2nd, 3rd or fourth mixture and the killing starts anew until the whole country is cleaned of this nuisance and habitable again for the islanders and saved for the Dominion of South Africa as a whaling-station and an outpost of the British Empire.

The costs: My mixture which looks similar to sawdust or brown rawjugar costs about seven shillings a pound. Of course this mixture has been tried out and approved by the chemical federal Swiss laboratories and authorities. The last few months we have used it in many a Swiss city, killing the rats and mice living on the city's waste /dumping

COPY.

Basle, Switzerland the 3rd of Dec. 1937.

H.M. General-Governor of the
Dominion of South Africa,
CAPE TOWN.

Dear Sir,

A few months ago I was reading in a monthly paper that the island of Tristan da Cunha, which belongs, as far as I know, to the Dominion of South Africa, is so very hard invaded by rats, that Your Government sees itself obliged to evacuate the whole population of the said group of islands, and to take it over to South Africa, as the inhabitants of these islands are no longer able to make a living, due to the tremendous number of these beastly rats. As I understand, do these beasts not only eat up the islanders' food supplies but are also destroying their crop of potatoes and grain or whatever it is and do also great damage to the herds of cattle.

This trouble could be helped. I am convinced of being able to save these islands for the people living there and to free the inhabitants from this ordeal in extinguishing practically all the rats if the Government of South Africa gives me an order to do so and puts the necessary means to my disposal.

After long years of tryouts I have succeeded of putting together a poisonous mixture of ratbite which is very attractive for rats and mice and which kills these beasts inside of 3 to 4

/hours ...

No. 33/2007.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
PRETORIA.

20th December, 1937.

Sir,

I am directed by the Governor-General to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 3rd December, 1937, relative to the destruction of rats on the island of Tristan da Cunha, and to inform you that His Excellency has referred your letter to his Ministers for their consideration.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

(Sgd.) J. H. DAVIS

SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

Mr. Max Erni, living there and to from the Schindlerstrasse Thiersteinerallee 64, inquiring practically all the Basle, the Government of South Africa office at SWITZERLAND.

HN.

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Duplicate

Basle, Switzerland the 3rd of Dec. 1937.

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approach to London
Office, London
H.M. General
M. and sent
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Dear Sir, M
file 2/12*

H.M. General - Governor of the
Union of South - Africa

Cape - Town.

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