

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF
SOUTH AFRICA.

51

No. 22 / 23

OFFICE OR INDIVIDUAL
From

S of S
No. 235.

1924
24 July

SUBJECT

Tristan da Cunha

Views of the Imperial Govt. regarding proposed
settlement of youths and children in the Union :
states that question of arranging more or less regular
visits being considered.

PREVIOUS PAPERS

22/8

14-8-24 To Ministers

MINUTES

Secy.

? To Mr. ... for information

[Handwritten signature]

13/8

[Handwritten initials]

SUBSEQUENT PAPERS

No. 22 / 23

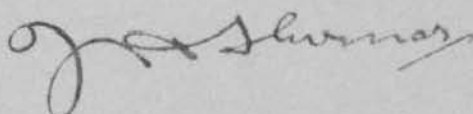
question of arranging for more or less regular visits to the island is now being further investigated, and in the event of its being found possible to arrive at a satisfactory arrangement for this purpose, the proposal referred to above will be carefully considered with other alternative schemes which may suggest themselves for assisting the islanders.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

humble servant,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. S. Thomas". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed text of the letter.

927

RECD. G.G.O.
11 AUG 1924
22/23

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

DOWNING STREET,

NO. 235.

24 July, 1924.

My Lord,

22/8

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Your Excellency's despatch No.94 of the 11th March forwarding a copy of a Minute from Ministers on the subject of Tristan da Cunha. I note that it has now been finally decided that the Government of the Union of South Africa is unable to undertake the administration of the island.

2. I am much obliged for the full consideration which has been given to the matter and for the offer of the Church of England Authorities to provide hostel accommodation for youths and children transferred from the island to the Union under the scheme outlined in the Minute.

3. It will however be appreciated that the problem is primarily one of communication between Tristan da Cunha and the outside world; and if the proposal to transfer some of the younger inhabitants to the Union were adopted, the fact that the children would thus be separated from their parents would increase rather than diminish the need for establishing such communication. The

GOVERNOR GENERAL,
HIS EXCELLENCY,
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE,
THE EARL OF ATHLONE,
etc., etc., etc.

Copy sent to *Minister*. question
For *Information*
Minute NO. *22/23*
Date *14 August 1924*
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., D.S.O.,
STATION

The Friend

16th February 1925

Exiled on Lonely Island

Minister's Return from Tristan da Cunha.

YEARS OF LONELINESS AND WANT.

(From Our Correspondent.)

DURBAN, Saturday.—The Rev. Mr. Rogers, accompanied by his wife and their baby son Edward, born to them during their voluntary exile, have arrived here on the steamship "Ramon de Larranga."

It was close on three years ago, to be precise in March, 1922, that Mr. Rogers and his young wife went to Tristan da Cunha to serve as missionaries, school teachers, and medical helpers to the people of that isolated community of the southern seas, which was founded generations ago by William Glass, whose descendants bulk large in its slender population of to-day.

In the intervening years Mr. and Mrs. Rogers have not merely served the islanders faithfully and well, but by constant kindness and patient, self-sacrificing help, have endeared themselves to every man, woman and child on the island, so that when the time came to depart the tears of the inhabitants were mingled with their cheers.

It was by the merest fluke that the opportunity to leave the island presented itself. There had been no mail-boat for two weary years. For 13 months the islanders had not even seen a passing ship, when suddenly, the "Ramon de Larranga" hove in sight, and her commander, Captain J. K. Jones, who had paid a previous visit to Tristan some 14 years ago, was kind enough to remain sufficiently long to enable Mr. and Mrs. Rogers to pack their belongings and make their adieu to the simple, primitive flock.

Ship Hailed with Joy.

"It is difficult to tell you what I feel like," he said to an interviewer, "after being completely cut from the world for so long; it is almost as though one were returning home from a long trip to the moon."

"The feeling uppermost in our minds is one of great gratitude to Captain Jones, whose advent was most providential. Our term of service at Tristan had, of course, expired, and we were beginning to be sorely perplexed as to how we should get away. My wife's health and that of our baby had begun to suffer severely from the hardships of life on the island.

"I was myself suffering from considerable strain. Our stores had long been exhausted, we had had no flour or sugar for many months, and no groceries at all, save a small supply of tea, meat and potatoes.

"Sometimes we were reduced to subsisting on sea birds and their eggs. Can you wonder that we hailed the coming of Captain Jones with joy, and eagerly accepted his offer of a passage to his first port of call, Durban? Yet we were happy at Tristan, and I do not regret a single moment of the time we spent there.

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Months of Loneliness.

"We were scarcely ever idle, what with school, morning and afternoon, three church services daily, and four on Sundays. I acted as dispenser of medicine, and my wife as V.A.D. We had numerous accidents to attend to, both slight and serious, and there were constant calls upon our medicine chest. Then I had my troop of Boy Scouts to train—a fine sturdy lot of lads—while my wife had classes for the women and girls in domestic and religious subjects.

"Our house was freely open to the islanders. They would come in at all hours of the day seeking our help and advice. Simple, kindly folk they are, and so readily responsive to kindness and wise guidance."

The Rev. Mr. Rogers recalled the long spells of loneliness when weeks and months are spent in vain longings for the ships that never come.

"Just imagine," he said, "a period of 13 months, during which no ship was even sighted from the island. Think of two years without a single mailboat. Yet the people could be so easily satisfied. A mail once a year, preferably by means of a warship, is all they ask for."

Stagnant Monotony.

"The visit of H.M.S. 'Dublin' is still talked of among the islanders as one of the great experiences of their lives. If people could only visualise the terrible sense of isolation, of stagnant monotony, I am sure an earnest effort would be made to meet the wants of these poor folk, marooned on a small island, remote from any possible association with their fellow men.

"I do hope most earnestly," said the Rev. Mr. Rogers, "that somebody with the necessary influence will move in the matter."

Mrs. Rogers has collected a mass of material for a small book on the subject of Tristan da Cunha. It is the hope both of herself and her husband that its contents may move the British Empire to act in a kinder way towards the people of this, its smallest outpost.

The island people, they said, are almost constantly beset by privations and hardships. Often they are half-starved, and nearly all of them suffer from frequent sickness, induced by bad and irregular feeding. And then the weary waiting for supplies, never knowing whether a ship may put into the anchorage this month or next, or not for another year or so, disheartens them.

"If only they had an annual mail," Mr. Rogers said, "they could live quite comfortably. They begged me most earnestly to petition the Government to that effect."

(Continued from previous column.)

Touching Scenes.

Describing the exciting scenes which occurred on the island when Captain Jones's ship was sighted, the Rev. Mr. Rogers said it was touching to witness the gratitude of the people for the stores which the seamen gave them.

The minister had to hustle round to be in time to leave with the ship, and his final duties on the island included a farewell church service, visits to the sick, and the marriage of two couples, who were anxious to be united before he left.

In his baggage the Rev. Mr. Rogers brought a large batch of letters, written month after month in the last three years, in the hope that a ship would come along to take them to their destination.

There was a public holiday on the island to celebrate the 21st birthday of Mrs. Rogers. The anniversary feast comprised nine sheep, two pigs and 40 Tristan puddings.

In September last year prayers for ships were said daily in the church.