

Received

"The Leases may have contained some provision authorising the Company to perform acts of administration. Even so, however, mere occupation for 4 years (up to 1930) by a Lessee Company under a Lease terminated at the request of the Lessees in 1934 and not followed by any further display of sovereignty would not be likely to impress the International Court.

(d) It is necessary to add that if we could establish a claim to Title by occupation there does not appear to be any sufficient evidence of intention to give up our sovereignty to support the claim that we have abandoned the Islands, though the cancellation of the leases in 1934 might be quoted against us".

Yours sincerely,

SGD: G. HEATON NICHOLLS.

... as a means of obtaining Title to ... of two islands ...

The evidence of animus is very thin. The ... of licenses is by itself of little ... The Islands appear not to have been ... in His Majesty's dominions, and it is ... thing before 1934 upon which we could rely ... factus. Any suggestion that ... from the settlement established ... the Prince Edward Islands would appear to ... at least by the warning to the ... that their operations would be ... at their own risk. The result appears to ... of the Islands would be ... as a private matter and not on behalf of ...

(e) The strongest claim would seem to rest on the ... in 1934 by the United Kingdom Government and subsequent occupation by the Lessees. Recent authorities however, require, to establish the necessary factum, not only actual occupation, but something in the nature of administration.

/The .....

File Lt Marshal the Rt. Hon. J.S. Smuts,  
O.M., P.C., C.H., K.C., D.T.D.,  
Lyde Park Hotel,  
Knightsbridge,  
LONDON, S.W.1.

22nd November, 1947.

SECRET:

My dear Prime Minister,

The following is the result of my investigations regarding the question of the Prince Edward Islands.

The Commonwealth Relations Office have expressed interest in learning of the consideration which the Union Government is giving to these Islands and hopes to be kept as closely informed as possible of the outcome of the Union Government's examination of the problems involved.

The Commonwealth Relations Office have held interdepartmental discussions as a result of which they report that they see no objection in principle to the transfer of the Prince Edward Islands to South Africa (or of Heard Island, and with it the McDonald Islands, to Australia). As regards the present Title of the Prince Edward Islands, the views of the Legal Adviser to the Commonwealth Relations Office may be summarised as follows:-

"(a) Occupation as a means of obtaining Title to a territory consists of two elements (a) an intention to exercise sovereignty (animus); and (b) actual occupation (factum).

(b) The evidence of animus is very thin. There mere granting of licences is by itself of little value. The Islands appear not to have been formally annexed to His Majesty's Dominions, nor it seems is there anything before 1926 upon which we could rely to establish factum. Any advantage which we might have obtained from the settlement established in 1909 in the Prince Edward Islands would appear to have been lost by the warning to the South Sealing Company that their operations would be carried out entirely at their own risk. The result appears to be that any occupation of the Islands would be regarded as a private venture and not on behalf of the Crown.

(c) The strongest claim would seem to rest on the Leases granted in 1926 by the United Kingdom Government and subsequent occupation by the Lessees. Recent authorities however, require, to establish the necessary factum, not only actual occupation, but something in the nature of administration.

/The .....

Ld Marshal the Rt. Hon. J.S. Smuts,  
O.M., P.C., C.H., K.C., D.T.D.,  
Iyde Park Hotel,  
Knightsbridge,  
LONDON, S.W.1.

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(d) It is necessary to add that if we could establish a claim to Title by occupation there does not appear to be any sufficient evidence of intention to give up our sovereignty to support the claim that we have abandoned the Islands, though the cancellation of the leases in 1934 might be quoted against us".

Yours sincerely,

SGD: G. HEATON NICHOLLS.

The occupation as a means of obtaining title to a territory consists of two elements (a) an intention to exercise sovereignty (animus); and (b) actual occupation (factum).

(a) The evidence of animus is very thin. There were no signs of intention to exercise sovereignty. The Islands appear not to have been formally annexed to His Majesty's Dominions, nor is there any evidence before 1934 upon which we could rely to establish animus. Any advantage which we might have obtained from the settlement established in 1926 by the Prince of Wales Islands would appear to have been lost by the decision of the South Sealing Company that their operations would be carried out entirely at their own risk. The result appears to be that any occupation of the Islands would be regarded as a private venture and not on behalf of the Crown.

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/The .....

Field Marshal the Rt. Hon. J.S. Smuts,  
O.M., P.C., C.H., K.C., D.T.D.,  
Hyde Park Hotel,  
Knightsbridge,  
LONDON, S.W.1.

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O.M., P.C., C.H., K.C., D.T.D.,  
Hyde Park Hotel,  
Knightsbridge,  
LONDON, S.W.1.

49/88/2

SPRINGBOK.

25th November, 1947.

SECRET:

My dear Forsyth,

I have telegraphed you today that the United Kingdom Government have no objection to our immediate occupation and effective administration of Prince Edward Islands. The Prime Minister will no doubt report to the Cabinet on his discussions here with the British authorities.

I enclose a copy of a letter I sent to the Prime Minister on the 22nd November.

Yours sincerely,

G. HEATON NICHOLLS

D. D. Forsyth Esq.,  
Secretary for External Affairs,  
Union Buildings,  
PRETORIA.

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O.M., P.C., C.H., K.C., D.T.D.,  
Hyde Park Hotel,  
Knightsbridge,  
LONDON, S.W.1.

PM 102/2



SOUTH AFRICA HOUSE,  
TRAFALGAR SQUARE,  
LONDON, W. C. 2.

Telegraphic Address:  
"OPPOSITELY, TRAFALGAR SQUARE, LONDON"

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

Reference No. 19/88/2

SPRINGBOK.

25th November, 1947.



*Handwritten notes:*  
4:30 pm  
17:29/2  
SECRET:  
me solve  
1/1/47  
M. ...

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Yours sincerely,

*Handwritten signature: A. M. ...*

D. D. Forsyth Esq.,  
Secretary for External Affairs,  
Union Buildings,  
PRETORIA.

*Handwritten notes:*  
M. ...  
File

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Telegraphic Address:  
"OPPOSITELY, TRAPALGAR SQUARE, LONDON"

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

25th November, 1947.

Reference No. 19/88/2

SPRINGBOK.



*Handwritten notes:*  
4:30 pm  
29/11  
SECRET:  
1/12  
M. ...

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I have telegraphed you today that the United Kingdom Government have no objection to our immediate occupation and effective administration of Prince Edward Islands. The Prime Minister will no doubt report to the Cabinet on his discussions here with the British authorities.

I enclose a copy of a letter I sent to the Prime Minister on the 22nd November.

Yours sincerely,

*Handwritten signature: A. Steyn*

D. D. Forsyth Esq.,  
Secretary for External Affairs,  
Union Buildings,  
PRETORIA.

*Handwritten notes:*  
File

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Field Marshal the Rt. Hon. J.S. Smuts,  
O.M., P.C., C.H., K.C., D.T.D.,  
Hyde Park Hotel,  
Knightsbridge,  
LONDON, S.W.1.

It would be appreciated if, in accordance with your undertaking, you would arrange for Major Harvey of your Department to undertake the necessary enquiries with regard to the procurement of the articles listed above.

I have caused a telegram to be despatched to the High Commissioner today for the procurement of all available data in the possession of the United Kingdom authorities.

A copy of this letter is being addressed to General Poole and Dr. du Toit for their personal and secret information.

Yours sincerely,

**D. D. FORSYTH**



P.M.102/2.

P R E T O R I A.

17th December, 1947.

TOP SECRET.

My dear Gibson,

Establishment of South African Sovereignty  
over Prince Edward Islands.

I have to place on record that at the meeting in my office today, which was also attended by yourself, Major-General Poole, and Dr. du Toit, Under-Secretary for Agriculture, it was decided to recommend to the Government that the expedition to be sent to the Prince Edward Islands should include the following :-

- 1 Building Artisan - Foreman-Carpenter.
- 3 Meteorological Officers.
- 3 Tele-Communications Officers.
- 1 Medical Orderly and Dispenser.
- 1 Sealing and Guano Expert.
- 2 Aviation Experts.

It was also decided that it would be an advantage if arrangements could be made, perhaps at a later date, for six Islanders from Tristan da Cunha to be transferred to the Prince Edward and Marion Islands.

The following is a list of the supplies which it is thought will be required for the expedition :-

- 1 Jeep.
- 1 Water Distillation Plant.
- 1 Water Purification Plant.
- Water Tanks.
- Food Supplies.
- Medical Supplies.
- Blankets, etc.
- Tents.
- 1 Motor Boat.
- Pre-fabricated Houses.
- Meteorological and tele-communications instruments.
- Fishing gear.
- All necessary tools - including agricultural imple-  
ments.
- Seeds.
- Fuel and Oil.
- Beacons.
- Theodolites and Levels, etc.
- Flag and flag-post.

It/

Jack Gibson, Esq.,  
Secretary for Transport,  
PRETORIA.

P.M.102/2.

PRETORIA.

17th December, 1947.

TOP SECRET.

My dear Poole,

Establishment of South African Sovereignty  
over Prince Edward Islands.

With reference to the meeting held in my office today, I now forward, for your secret and personal information, a copy of a letter I have addressed to the Secretary for Transport in regard to the above-mentioned matter.

I should be glad to learn in due course whether you have succeeded in making the necessary arrangements in regard to the air reconnaissance and the subsequent availability of a frigate. There is, of course, also the question of the availability of tradesmen (carpenters) among the seamen.

Yours sincerely,

D. D. FORSYTH

Major-General W.H.E. Poole,  
C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.

P.M.102/2.

PRETORIA.

17th December, 1947.

TOP SECRET.

Dear Dr. du Toit,

Establishment of South African Sovereignty  
over Prince Edward Islands.

With reference to the meeting held in my office today, I now forward, for your secret and personal information, a copy of a letter I have addressed to the Secretary for Transport in regard to the above-mentioned matter.

I should be glad to learn in due course whether your Department has come to any decision with regard to the official who will have to be included in the party in connection with guano and sealing.

Yours sincerely,

D. D. FORSYTH

Dr. M.S. du Toit,  
Under-Secretary for Agriculture,  
PRETORIA.

IMMEDIATE TELEGRAM.

FROM: SECRETARY FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, PRETORIA.  
TO : HIGH COMMISSIONER, LONDON. 17th December, 1947.  
17th December, 1947.

No. 1226. SECRET (EAS).

From Forsyth for Scallan :

Heaton Nicholls' No. 1136 refers.

We are giving consideration to arrangements for earliest occupation of the Islands. Could you please obtain from United Kingdom authorities, as matter of the greatest urgency, the fullest possible available information regarding the general conditions on both Prince Edward and Marion Islands and despatch same to me by earliest air mail. This information should contain details available regarding, e.g. water supply, nature of pre-fabricated houses to be erected for occupying personnel, size of islands, distance between two islands, vegetation, nautical information, special foodstuffs required by occupying personnel, etc.

We should greatly appreciate receiving information required shortly after Christmas, but earlier if possible.

We are treating matter as top secret.

6. The Proclamation subsequently to be published in the Government Gazette.
7. A statement to be made to Parliament on the date of publication of the Proclamation. It is recommended that this statement should make no reference whatsoever to South Africa's strategic interest in the Islands and should be limited to an explanation of their value as a site for a meteorological station and as a source of guano and seal oil. Any reference to strategic considerations might prompt unfavourably-disposed elements to interest the Security Council in the matter.
8. A Bill to be prepared to provide for the administration of the Territory under a Department of State, e.g. the Office of the Prime Minister.
9. A copy of the Proclamation and of the statement transferring to the Union Government any previous prescriptive right exercised by the United Kingdom Government to be lodged with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.
10. South African overseas representatives to inform the Governments to which they are accredited of the terms of the Proclamation, and British representatives to do likewise in countries where the Union has no diplomatic representation.

TOP SECRET.

Steps to be taken in regard to acquisition of  
the Prince Edward Islands.

1. Signature of a Proclamation by the Governor-General-in-Council formally placing the Islands under the sovereignty of His Majesty the King in his Government of the Union of South Africa.
2. Proclamation might have the following rough headings :-
  - (a) WHEREAS the Union of South Africa has in the past maintained a close connection with the Territory known as Prince Edward Islands (consisting of Prince Edward Island and Marion Island situate at latitude.....longitude.....) as exemplified by the operations of the Southern Sealing Company of Capetown from 1909 onwards and of the Kerguelen Sealing and Oiling Company of Capetown from 1926 to 1934;
  - (b) AND WHEREAS the Territory has for many years been terra nullius, having long since ceased to be under effective occupation;
  - (c) AND WHEREAS the Territory is now under effective occupation by His Majesty's Government in the Union of South Africa;
  - (d) I NOW PROCLAIM that the Territory is hereby placed under the sovereignty of His Majesty the King of Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the Sea in his Government of the Union of South Africa.

- (f) He will render every assistance both to the Captain of the ship and the S.A.A.F. representative with whom he will act in the closest liaison.
  - (g) Capt. Anderson will report as soon as possible by TOP SECRET SIGNAL on the fresh water, situation and building materials available.
15. Capt. D.A. Broadhurst - will carry out a recce and will report in accordance with orders issued to him by the D.G.A.F.
  16. Lt. Comd. J. Fairbairn - will carry out a recce and will report in accordance with orders issued to him by D.S.A.N.F.

INTER-COMMUNICATION

17. All inter-communication will be by TOP SECRET SIGNAL. Ships' signals will be addressed DECHIEF, OFFICER ONLY, PERSONAL FOR D.C.G.S. AND D.S.A.N.F.

COVER PLAN

18. The operation will be regarded as a LAND/SEA SIGNAL EXERCISE on the TRISTAN DE CUNHA run.

SECURITY

19. All ranks involved including Ships' Companies will be sworn to secrecy. ....longitude.....)

CODE NAMES

20. PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND - "WILLIAM" 1939 onwards
  - MARION ISLAND - "ORANGE" and Billing Company
21. Acknowledge.

*[Handwritten signature]*

Maj Gen  
for General  
CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF.

9. In the event of the Captain finding the Islands already legally occupied by a foreign power, he will communicate this fact immediately by TOP SECRET signal to DECHIEF (PERSONAL FOR D.C.G.S. AND D.S.A.N.F.) and will await further orders.
10. In the event of a foreign power attempting to secure Sovereignty over the Islands during this period, the Captain will land a party to inhabit the Islands.

Phase - 2

11. The Department of External Affairs is arranging an expedition to establish permanent settlement on the Islands, which will include the following :-
  - (a) 1 - Building artisan (Foreman/Carpenter)
  - (b) 3 - Meteorological Officers
  - (c) 3 - Telecommunications Officers
  - (d) 1 - Medical Orderly/Dispenser (to be found by UDF)
  - (e) 1 - Sealing Guano expert
12. This expedition together with all requisite stores will be carried to the Islands in H.M.S.A.S. GOOD HOPE and H.M.S.A.S. NATAL on about 12th January 1948.

Ships crews will render every assistance to the expedition in erection of buildings and all other matters concerned with the establishment of the settlement.

SPECIAL DUTIES

13. The following will accompany H.M.S.A.S. TRANSVAAL:-
  - Capt. W.D. Anderson (S.A.E.C.)
  - Capt. D.A. Broadhurst (S.A.A.F.)
  - Cpl. R.J.R.J. Smith (S.A.A.F. - Ciphers)
14. Capt. W.D. Anderson - will carry out a complete engineering recce of the Islands and will report fully on the following :-
  - (a) General topography.
  - (b) Material resources for building, such as timber, stone, sand.
  - (c) A comprehensive recce of fresh water with special reference to quantity, quality and accessibility.
  - (d) Nature of soil in relation to foundations, roads and air force requirements.
  - (e) Any other matters relating to permanent occupation, including selection of building sites.



DCGS. H.1/31

December 1947.

DIRECTOR S.A. NAVAL FORCES

DIRECTOR GENERAL AIR FORCE

DIRECTOR OF SIGNALS

→ SECRETARY FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (For information)

OPERATION "SNOEKTOWN"

CONFIRMATION OF VERBAL ORDERS DATED 19 DEC 1947

INFORMATION

1. The group consists of two islands - PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND (46-deg 36mS 37-deg 57mE) and MARION ISLAND (46-deg 53mS 37-deg 45mE).
2. Refer to :-
  - (a) Summary prepared by S.A.N.F.
  - (b) Summary prepared by S.A.A.F.
  - (c) Summary prepared by D.M.I.
3. The group lies about 1,200 statute miles SOUTH EAST of the UNION and 1,500 miles SOUTH of MADAGASCAR. No land lies between this group and the UNION. Only GREAT BRITAIN has laid claim to the group, but legally it is doubtful whether an inchoate British Title now exists.
4. The islands are thought to be uninhabited.

*Handwritten notes:*  
17/12/47  
18/12/47  
19/12/47

INTENTION

5. Establishment of South African Sovereignty over PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND (46-deg 36mS 37-deg 57mE) and MARION ISLAND (46 deg 53mS 37-deg 45mE).

METHOD

Phase - 1

6. H.M.S.A.S. TRANSVAAL (Captain - Lt.Comd. John Fairbairn S.A.N.F.) will proceed to the Islands on the 21st. December 1947. On arrival, the Captain with suitable escort, will emplant securely a flag staff on each of the islands and will hoist the UNION FLAG. This operation will be photographed.
7. The Captain will also read the Instrument of Sovereignty and then place it in a weatherproof container at the foot of the flag staff, and will cause a notice to be painted in a prominent place indicating the presence of the Instrument.
8. Having hoisted the UNION FLAG and declared South African Sovereignty over the Islands, H.M.S.A.S. TRANSVAAL will remain in the area until relieved by the expedition in Para-11 below, or ordered elsewhere.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This flag has been raised on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the Union of South Africa on this 29<sup>th</sup> day of December, Nineteen Hundred and Forty Seven, preparatory to the permanent occupation by the Government of the Union of South Africa of this territory known as Marion Island. This occupation will take place within the course of the next few weeks.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JOHN FAIRBAIRN,  
S.A.N.F.

CAPTAIN H.M.S.A.S. TRANSVAAL.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This flag has been raised on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the Union of South Africa on this <sup>January</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> day of December, Nineteen Hundred and Forty <sup>Eight</sup> Seven, preparatory to the permanent occupation by the Government of the Union of South Africa of this territory known as Prince Edward Island. This occupation will take place within the course of the next few weeks.

Note: The original of this document and of the one relating to Marion Island handed to Major Peters at 10.15 a.m. today for delivery to General Poole (in a sealed envelope addressed to Gen. P.).

BR.

19/12/47.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JOHN FAIRBAIRN,  
S.A.N.F.

CAPTAIN H.M.S.A.S. TRANSVAAL.

The contents of this telegram must be paraphrased if they are communicated to any person outside a Government Department.

Received 20.12.1947.

MOST IMMEDIATE TELEGRAM.

FROM: HIGH COMMISSIONER, LONDON.  
TO : SECRETARY FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, PRETORIA.

19th December, 1947.

S

~~TOP SECRET (EAS)~~

No. 1188. TOP SECRET (EAS).

For Forsyth from Scallan:

Your 1226. Prince Edward Islands.

We got into immediate touch with United Kingdom authorities yesterday afternoon and have now been informed that there is very little information available which would be of use to us. Admiralty, however, are taking immediate steps to assemble whatever nautical information they have and Hamilton will visit Polar Research Institute at Cambridge during the week-end to obtain whatever information is available there.

In discussion with Commonwealth Relations Office this morning we learnt that Australian expedition has already reached Heard Island and is now unloading ashore food and stores. Australians plan to issue almost immediately press release announcing the raising of Australian flag and the initiation of their programme on the Island (see 2nd annexe to P(47)40 enclosed in minute airmailed to you 5th December).

In view of difficulties United Kingdom now encountering in regard to Falkland Island Dependencies, Commonwealth Relations Office propose to ask Australians to soft-pedal their announcement about annexation at this moment; but you will appreciate increased necessity for urgency in carrying out whatever plans we ourselves may have, in view of possible reaction to Australian announcement.

P.M. Frigate HMSAS Transvaal leaves Cape Town tomorrow.

Copy to 2nd Poole.

*Handwritten initials*

COMMISSIONER JOHN PATERSON, S.S.N.P.

SECRETARY S.H.S.A.E. TRANSVAAL.

*Vertical list of administrative notes on the left margin.*

P.M.102/2.

P R E T O R I A .

20th December, 1947.

TOP SECRET.

My dear General,

Establishment of South African Sovereignty  
over Prince Edward Islands.

I forward herewith, for your secret and personal information, a copy of a telegram, No. 1188 of the 19th instant which has just been received from our High Commissioner in London in regard to the above matter.

This telegram is the reply to the telegram we sent on the 17th idem asking the High Commissioner to procure from the United Kingdom authorities all available data in regard to the Islands.

Yours sincerely,

D. D. FORSYTH

Major-General W.H.E. Poole,  
C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.

Telegraphic Address: "LANDBOU, PRETORIA."

All letters to be addressed to  
The Secretary for Agriculture,  
Union Buildings, Pretoria.



Telegramadres: „LANDBOU, PRETORIA.“

Alle briewe moet gerig word aan:  
Die Sekretaris van Landbou,  
Uniegebou, Pretoria.

Yerseld in u antwoord asb. | No. R. 17694  
In reply please quote

## UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.—UNIE VAN SUID-AFRIKA.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,  
UNION BUILDINGS,  
PRETORIA.

DEPARTEMENT VAN LANDBOU  
UNIEGEBOU,  
PRETORIA.

PERSONAL.

20/12/47

THE SECRETARY FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS:

Dear Mr. Forsyth,

With reference to recent discussions,  
I wish to nominate Mr. T.L. Kruger, Superintendent of the  
Government Guano Islands, Cape Town, as a sealing and guano  
officer to accompany the expedition.

Yours sincerely,

ACTING SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE.

Mr. Gibson informed of  
above by Mr. Pohl.

G.R.

UNDER SECRETARY:

Miss Bell-Wood of 'The Star' telephoned this morning and asked me whether I could obtain from Mr. Forsyth - or, in his absence, from you - confirmation of a rumour that had reached 'The Star'.

She then referred to a report which had appeared in this morning's "Rand Daily Mail" (attached) in regard to the so-called "mystery mission" of the frigate "Transvaal", and said that it was rumoured that (a) the "Transvaal" was racing the Russians to plant the South African flag on an hitherto-unclaimed region in the Antarctic; or (b) she was racing to the assistance of the Australians, who had recently occupied Heard Island, and had appealed for help.

Miss Bell-Wood asks whether you can confirm or deny these rumours.

*W.*

22.12.1947.

NOTE:

In consequence of the above request I spoke to Mr. Noble, who is acting for Mr. Cuthbertson, and told him that we were sorry that the Rand Daily Mail had seen fit to publish this story; that the allegations made by Miss Bell-Wood are unfounded; and that the least said about the whole matter the better pleased we would be.

After consulting with General Poole, who told me he had also had from Capetown a report of the rumour at (a) above but that Commander Dean, to whom it had been addressed, had simply said that the frigate was going on an exercise cruise and that he had nothing further to say, we agreed that to comply with the request made to me by Mr. Noble, namely, that we ask all Editors specially to mention nothing about this cruise, might serve only to make people more inquisitive, and that the best way would be for this Department to say that enquiries made had revealed that the frigate was going on an exercise cruise Southwards in order to test new wireless communications and that we had no interest in nor knowledge of the details. I later informed Mr. Noble along these lines.

*W.*

22.12.1947.

THE UNDER SECRETARY:

Miss Bell-Wood of 'The Star' telephoned and asked me whether I could obtain from Mr. or, in his absence, from you - confirmation that had reached 'The Star'.

She then referred to a report which had this morning's "Rand Daily Mail" (attached) the so-called "mystery mission" of the frigate and said that it was rumoured that (a) the frigate was racing the Russians to plant the South African flag on an hitherto-unclaimed region in the Antarctic (b) she was racing to the assistance of the ship who had recently occupied Heard Island, and had appealed for help.

Miss Bell-Wood asks whether you can confirm or deny these rumours.

*W.*

22.12.1947.

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In consequence of the above request I spoke to Mr. Noble, who is acting for Mr. Cuthbertson, and told him that we were sorry that the Rand Daily Mail had seen fit to publish this story; that the allegations made by Miss Bell-Wood are unfounded; and that the least said about the whole matter the better pleased we would be.

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*N.I.*

22.12.1947.

**S.A. Frigate Sails  
Under Sealed  
Orders**

From Our Own Correspondent  
CAPE TOWN. Sunday.—The South African frigate Transvaal left Cape Town harbour hurriedly this morning with sealed orders for an undisclosed destination.

Complete secrecy surrounded the vessel's departure, but Commodore P. J. Dean, Director of the South African Naval Forces, stated that the ship was on a routine service exercise and no further information could be given.

The crew of the Transvaal, who expected to have Christmas leave ashore, were ordered to stand by, and on Saturday night they were instructed to make ready for sailing.



**SECRET**

The contents of this telegram must be paraphrased if they are communicated to any person outside a Government Department.

Received 22.12.1947.

MOST IMMEDIATE TELEGRAM.

FROM: HIGH COMMISSIONER, LONDON.  
TO : SECRETARY FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, PRETORIA.

22.12.1947.

The text referred to in the Secretary's telegram of the 20th inst. is the so-called "Secret" and will be dealt with in an appropriate manner on an appropriate occasion.

( ) No. 1192. TOP SECRET (EAS).

For Forsyth from Scallan.

Re: Further your 1226. Prince Edward Islands.

London Daily Mail today has a report from Capetown correspondent announcing that frigate "Transvaal" has sailed from Table Bay under sealed orders, presumably in connection with South African interests in Antarctic Islands.

In view of our confidential relations with United Kingdom authorities and their strong interest in matter, would be grateful for information in regard to development of our plans.

2. In the meanwhile considerable amount of material gleaned over week-end is being despatched to you today by air mail.

The text referred to in the Secretary's telegram of the 20th inst. is the so-called "Secret" and will be dealt with in an appropriate manner on an appropriate occasion.

The contents of this message must be paraphrased if they are communicated to any person outside a Government Department.

Received 24.12.47.

TELEGRAM.

FROM: HIGH COMMISSIONER, LONDON.  
TO : SECRETARY FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, PRETORIA.

23.12.1947.

No. 1193. TOP SECRET (EAS-PUB).

For Forsyth from Scallan:

My 1192. "Daily Mail" today reports alleged statement by Commodore Sturrock, S.A.N.F., that mission of frigate Transvaal, sailing from Capetown, is to investigate landing places in certain islands in Antarctica.

"Daily Express" of today, on the other hand, stated that a South African frigate had hurried off on Monday to the whaling grounds 1500 miles to the South. It was believed that trouble had arisen among 17 whaling expeditions, including British, Dutch, Norwegian and Russian ships. These reports have evoked enquiries to us from both United Kingdom and Australian authorities here, which we have been unable to answer.

Seen by P.M. Crossed over 1239

*[Signature]*  
24/12

**SECRET**

The contents of this telegram must be prepared if they are authorized to any person outside a Government Department.

TELEGRAM.

FROM: SECRETARY FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, PRETORIA.  
TO : HIGH COMMISSIONER, LONDON.

FROM: HIGH COMMISSIONER, LONDON.  
TO : SECRETARY FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, PRETORIA. 23rd December, 1947.

No. 1240. TOP SECRET (EAS).

Following Personal for Scallan:

Further to my 1239, the proposal now is that when the frigates taking the occupying party touch at Tristan da Cunha to pick up certain Union meteorological staff there they should also recruit on voluntary basis the services of from six to twelve male Islanders to accompany expedition and help particularly in regard to problems of local sea-faring and existence in that area. They would be properly accommodated and fed and plan would be to return them when transport available in from six to twelve months.

Would you kindly ascertain from United Kingdom Government as matter of urgency whether they would have any objection to such a scheme.

*See my 1239 dated 12/11/47*

NOTE FOR FILE.

On the 23rd December Mr. Gibson informed me that it had been found impossible for technical reasons to use the two frigates, as had been arranged, for the conveyance of the landing party and the material to Prince Edward Island. He said that the total essential load would amount to approximately 300 tons and that this was too much for the two frigates.

He said that information he had from Capetown suggested that the "Gamtoos", which belonged to the Government, would be suitable to take this load. I enquired, at his suggestion, from Commerce and Industries (de Waal Meyer) as to the "Gamtoos", but found that it belonged not to them but to Agriculture. I thereupon contacted Mr. Adams of Agriculture and he made enquiries from Capetown which revealed that the "Gamtoos" would be suitable for such a trip, both from the point of view of its cruising range and to take a load such as this. He said, however, that the "Gamtoos" was booked to leave on the 5th January on a routine cruise to certain guano islands off the South-West coast and that this cruise could not be postponed. He said that if the "Gamtoos" were to be used for the Prince Edward trip, it would necessitate their engaging another ship to do the guano islands cruise.

On subsequent discussion again with him, it transpired that nothing more serious than a delay in the collection of guano would result if the "Gamtoos" or a substitute is not put on to this job.

Today (24th December) I explained the matter as above to the Prime Minister, and he ruled that it was essential that the Prince Edward trip should be undertaken with as little delay as possible, and that we were to ask Agriculture for the use of the "Gamtoos". If they were able to engage another vessel for their guano collecting trip, the additional expenditure incurred thereby is authorised by him.

I informed Mr. Adams accordingly; also General Poole and Mr. Gibson.

*W.I.*

PRETORIA.

24th December, 1947.

P R E T O R I A .

12 AUG 1927

The High Commissioner for the  
Union of South Africa,  
L O N D O N .

Prince Edward Islands and Heard Island.

Please refer to your minute No. 19/88/2 of the 20th March, dealing inter alia with discussions in the Polar Committee on the desirability of attaching the Prince Edward Islands to the Union of South Africa.

This question has been referred to the Departments concerned and their comment shows that the islands would not only be of use to the Union as the site for a meteorological station, but also for direction finding in the event of a direct air route being established between South Africa and Australia. Military considerations also indicate the desirability of proceeding further with the proposal to strengthen the claim of the United Kingdom or of the Union of South Africa to sovereignty over the islands.

Interdepartmental discussions are still proceeding but you should inform the Polar Committee of the comments given above and ask whether the views of the United Kingdom departments concerned could be made available at an early date. In this regard you will recall that Mr. Syers intimated at the last meeting of the Polar Committee that he was endeavouring to ascertain the views of the appropriate United Kingdom authorities as to how the British Commonwealth claim to the islands could best be substantiated.

D. B. SOLE

SECRETARY FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS.

should assist very materially in arriving at a more accurate assessment of conditions appertaining to an open sea exposure. From the meteorological point of view the establishment of reporting stations on both islands would, therefore, have definite advantages.

6. Value of a Meteorological Station on the Prince Edward group of islands.

During the period H.M.S.A.S. Transvaal was at sea I prepared and analysed a daily meteorological chart making use of the data contained in wireless broadcasts from Waterkloof and consisting of reports from Union Meteorological Stations and Tristan da Cunha. I therefore had the opportunity of examining observations at the islands in conjunction with other data and, although this extended over a very brief period, it was sufficient to indicate the potential value of the station in the construction of more accurate weather maps for the Union, and to demonstrate that some of the hypotheses on which ocean analyses are at present based will require modification.

A very detailed and careful analysis over an extended period will require to be made before an accurate assessment of the value of a station on Marion Island can be made. It is, however, not improbable that the station will be of great value in assessing the subsequent behaviour and movement of disturbances observed at Tristan da Cunha, and thus assist materially in forecasting weather in the Union.

With the establishment of a first class Meteorological Station on Marion Island and with Australian stations on Heard and Macquarie Island, important gaps in the chain of high latitude meteorological stations in the Southern Hemisphere will be closed and it is strongly recommended that a team of research officers should concentrate on the problem of weather forecasting for medium range periods (up to a week). Some research on this problem was carried out towards the end of the war but has since been discontinued and it is felt that the time is now appropriate for the resumption of this investigation on an intensified scale.

In conclusion I have no hesitation in stating that the establishment of first class Meteorological Stations on the Marion, Heard and Macquarie Islands will be welcomed with acclamation by meteorologists throughout the world. In any scientific investigation the attack is on the most simple form of the problem before proceeding to the more complex, with vast expanses of ocean free from the complexities caused by the intrusion of land masses, provides a natural laboratory for the investigation of fundamental problems in meteorology and there can be no doubt that the establishment of a station on Marion Island will be recognised as a major contribution towards the development of this science.

(Sgd.) ?

Senior Meteorologist.

Division of Meteorology,  
15th January, 1948.

400F. With the protection of warm clothing I found the conditions invigorating after the warm humid climate of the Transvaal at this time of year.

A striking feature of the weather conditions is the suddenness with which changes take place. Abrupt changes in wind, cloud, visibility and weather frequently occurred with startling suddenness during the short period HMSAS Transvaal was in the vicinity of the islands.

The position selected for the anchorage enjoys considerable protection from wind and swell, and while the ship was at anchor winds were generally light and the swell slight, although a few miles seaward the sea was considerably disturbed. This anchorage is, however, exposed to North-Westerly winds and especial care should be exercised with a falling barometer with which this wind direction may usually be associated.

Fog should be of fairly frequent occurrence in the vicinity of the islands and was, in fact, observed on a number of occasions from Marion Island, but on none of these was the anchorage or the Northern coast of the island affected.

Climatic charts show the prevailing wind near the islands to be West-North-Westerly and that gales are of frequent occurrence. With the Southward migration of the high pressure systems in summer, however, spells of settled weather lasting three days or more with light winds (but with the risk of fog) may reasonably be expected.

#### 5. Selection of a site for a Meteorological Observing Station.

One of the difficulties of setting up a Meteorological Station on oceanic islands which rise abruptly from the sea is that of finding a suitable exposure where meteorological elements may be observed free from the influence of the island itself. Local orographic cloud or rain and the distortion of the wind direction by the physical features of the island tend to make observations unrepresentative of the open sea conditions.

Any arrangement in which the observer is required to assess and eliminate local effects is unsatisfactory and the exposure of the reporting station is therefore of paramount importance.

As far as I was able to judge, no site for a Meteorological Station free from orographic effects is available on either Marion or Prince Edward Island but to reduce those effects to a minimum a site as far removed as possible from the mountain peaks should be selected, and it is for this reason that a site on East Cape has been recommended. It is hoped that the practical difficulties of erecting a station on this Cape will not prove insurmountable, as a great deal of value as a meteorological reporting station would be lost by its erection in a poor exposure.

Should a detachment be maintained on Prince Edward Island the most suitable site would appear to be South Cape, and reports from this locality, in conjunction with those from a station on Marion Island at East Cape

Observation from the ship showed that the belt of kelp a few hundred yards offshore was almost continuous. The kelp is of a soft texture and not at all like the heavy tubular kelp found in Union waters, and the propellor of the ship's motorboat was able to cut through it without difficulty. The depth of the water in the belt of kelp near the landing place is 15 fathoms.

The kelp helps to dampen an agitated sea and the island's shores are free of surf, the only movement being tidal and the up and down movement associated with the swell.

### 3. Fauna.

The island abounds with seals and sea lions, some of the latter reaching a length of 15 to 20 feet. They are ponderous creatures and are able to move overland very slowly and with considerable difficulty. It is surprising, therefore, to find them at places above the cliffs to which the only access is over steep ground and, at the rate at which they were observed to travel, the journey from the water's edge could not take much less than a day.

Penguins are to be found on the beaches in thousands and they, like all other life on the island, are completely unafraid of human beings. King penguins, standing about 2½ feet high, are in large numbers and have a bright yellow patch at the back of the head and neck. Plumed penguins live in the rocky crags on the cliffs and greet passers by with an agitated raucous cackle.

Studded over the foothills were numerous nesting albatross within a mile or so of the sea. The nests are on the top of a small mound about 3 feet in diameter and raised about a foot above the surroundings.

Other birds included a brown-coloured bird, larger and more heavily built than the albatross, and with a protruding chest, and a small white bird which lived among the penguins.

A remarkable feature of the island is the apparent absence of any insect life, and no insects of any kind were seen, even in the vicinity of dead birds.

To support the seals, sea lions, penguins, ducks and other birds which abound, fish must be numerous but none were seen although the water is extremely clear. Hand grenades thrown from the ship at anchor failed to bring any fish to the surface.

### 4. Meteorological Conditions near the Islands.

The Antarctic Pilot describes the weather as "bleak, boisterous and foggy" and it would be difficult to improve on this concise description.

The air temperature varied between a minimum of 37° F. to a maximum of 46° F. and the sea temperature was practically constant and remained within a degree of



This passage was unexceptional and the strongest wind recorded was Force 4 on the Beaufort Scale, which is described as a moderate breeze. Early on Friday, 9th January, a rendezvous with HMSAS Natal was made and documents exchanged between the ships. A much needed supply of cigarettes was transferred from HMSAS Natal.

## 2. General Impressions of the Islands.

Marion Island rises to a height of 4200 feet above sea level and at the time of the visit was snow-capped above 3000 feet, approximately. Orographic cloud usually obscures the peaks but on occasions when it is absent the island presents a most striking picture. It is a picture which combines the strong contrast of snow and black volcanic rock with the delicate hues of the grass and mossy vegetation, which covers the undulating foothills, and ranges in colours through the shades of green and yellow. Interspersed are outcrops of red-tinted koppies.

Unfortunately it was not possible for the ship to circumnavigate the island close inshore and a nearby view of the Northern and Eastern shores only was obtained. Elsewhere the coast appeared most inhospitable and any landing place, exposed as it would be to the prevailing wind and swell, is likely to be extremely hazardous except on a small percentage of occasions.

The coastline terminates with a vertical drop to the sea of 50 to 100 feet on the North and East coast for most of its length, but this is interrupted at a number of places by rocky beaches behind which the rise from the sea is steep but not vertical. These beaches all appeared to be strewn with well rounded boulders ranging in size from about 1 to 3 feet. No sandy beach was seen.

Above the cliffs are the foothills rising in undulating slopes for a few miles to the peaks. Near the cliff edge is a belt of grass which would appear to be suitable for cattle grazing, but this soon gives way to a kind of water grass and mossy vegetation. No shrubs or trees were seen and, excepting near the cliffs, the ground I traversed was everywhere sodden and springy underfoot. Even on sharply rising ground this was the case, and a ship's officer who walked inland up the sloping foothills reported that it seemed to become more sodden further inland.

Near the coast a number of small water pans, 100 or more feet in diameter, were seen and there were several streams of fresh water, one of which flowed into the bay near East Cape referred to earlier in this report.

The soil on Marion Island appears to be rich and suitably chosen crops may become well adapted to the conditions. It also seems possible that the peaty soil of the swamps may prove suitable as fuel.

Prince Edward Island is situated North-North-East of Marion Island at a distance of about 14 miles. It rises to an altitude of 2400 feet above sea level and was free of snow when seen. It seems probable that the island is less boggy than Marion Island, but I did not have the opportunity of landing to make a check on this impression. It may be mentioned that the magnetic compass was disturbed in the vicinity of Prince Edward Island.

30th December and I, in company with the other officers attached to the ship, was permitted to go ashore just before noon. The intention was to make an overland expedition to East Cape, but soon after landing the recall signal was hoisted and no excursion from the vicinity of the landing place could be made.

That night a sudden squall developed and the ship put to sea and remained hove to in the vicinity of the island in fresh winds and a moderate swell until the afternoon of 1st January, when she was again anchored.

A period of settled weather ensued and on 3rd January stores for the shore party were landed and I was permitted to land soon after noon.

Captain Broadhurst, S.A.A.F. and I set out overland for East Cape along the coast and reached a point about 3 miles from the landing place and in close proximity to the Cape before being recalled. Near the landing place a three-legged iron pot (presumably a still) about 4 feet high and three feet in diameter was found together with some pieces of wood, iron hooks and other items, but there were no signs of the existence of buildings near the sight. In closer proximity to East Cape a well protected bay about 1000 yards across was seen, in which there was a flat protruding rock with vertical sides, which appeared to present good possibilities for the construction of a harbour. The ground rises sharply round the bay and a cableway would be necessary for haulage to the higher ground. No other landing places more suitable than that used were seen along this portion of the coast or at East Cape.

During the whole of 3rd January stores were landed for the use of the party to remain on the island after departure of the ship, and this operation was completed by the early evening.

On 4th January a party of 12 officers and men were landed on Marion Island. Anchor was weighed and course set for Prince Edward Island, which had not previously been visited during the expedition.

There was a belt of fog between the islands, but both islands were clear and the ship was anchored about a mile from Prince Edward Island. The Captain and party went ashore and hoisted the Union Flag and deposited the annexation document.

No other landing was made on Prince Edward Island and it is therefore only possible to report on observations made from the ship. The island appeared to be less marshy than Marion and was free of snow. In a fissure bursts of steam were observed but it is not possible to say whether these originated from hot springs or from slight volcanic activity.

Owing to a failure of the Radar equipment and uncertainty in regard to the extent of the fog on the return passage, the ship laid off from the islands and cruised in the vicinity until the afternoon of the 5th January when the Medical officer and First Lieutenant were landed on Marion Island. Soon after, the anchor was weighed and the return passage to Cape Town commenced.

REPORT ON EXPEDITION TO THE PRINCE  
EDWARD ISLANDS

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by

Mr. J.A. King, Senior Meteorologist,  
Department of Transport.

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1. Chronological Summary.

In accordance with instructions from the Secretary for Transport and with subsequent arrangements made with the Director S.A.N.F. I reported to Lt. Comdr. J. Fairbairn, Officer Commanding HMSAS Transvaal, at 0900 hours on Sunday, 21st December 1947, and the ship put to sea two hours later.

The outward passage was uneventful and Prince Edward Island was sighted early on Christmas morning at a time when the weather and visibility were deteriorating, the wind freshening and swell increasing. The Captain decided against an attempt at landing until the weather conditions improved, and the ship was accordingly hove to. The wind remained at gale force (exception for short periods) until the afternoon of 26th December, and the swell remained heavy and of average length until the afternoon of 27th December. During this period the height of the waves was estimated to be about 25 feet from trough to crest and occasionally exceeded 30 feet. The highest wind velocity I recorded was force 8, described as a fresh gale on the Beaufort Scale and falling within the limits of 34 to 40 knots in speed. Rainfall was small and occasional showers of snow of short duration occurred. Air temperatures varied between limits of 39° and 46° F. and the sea temperature was practically constant at 40° F.

On the morning of 28th December a course was steered between the islands from West to East and the Northern coast of Marion Island examined for a possible landing place. On this coast the most prominent and remarkable feature is Boot Rock, which derives its name from its resemblance to a Wellington boot, and rises to a height of 250 feet above sea level. An examination of the coast from the ship revealed no sign of habitation nor could the charted landing place be identified. During the day the wind again increased to gale force and the ship was once more hove to. On 29th December a further examination of the coast of Marion Island was made and finally a sheltered cove to the East of the charted landing place was selected for the landing, and the ship anchored about a mile off shore. The name "Transvaal Cove" has been assigned to the landing place in the ship's log.

The Captain and a party drawn from the ship's company proceeded ashore, hoisted the Union Flag and deposited the annexation document in a brass cylinder. On his return to the ship the Captain decided that no further landings would be made that day.

Off the Northern coast of Marion Island there is a belt of kelp about 50-100 feet wide and 200 yards offshore. Owing to the difficulty of pulling a boat through the kelp with oars, a line was erected between the shore and an anchor seaward of the kelp, and the boats hauled through the kelp on the line. This was completed early on

TELEGRAM

FROM: Secretary for External Affairs, Cape Town.  
TO: High Commissioner, London.

12th January, 1948.

No. 23 SECRET (DOM)

Your 14.

All other Commonwealth Governments are now being informed of text of proclamation to be read on Prince Edward and Marion Islands and of proposed press announcement as amended in light of United Kingdom's comments. You may advise United Kingdom authorities.

Rainfall was small and occasional showers of snow of short duration occurred. Air temperatures varied between limits of 39° and 46° F. and the sea temperature was practically constant at 40° F.

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*Share with*

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TELEGRAM

FROM: Secretary for External Affairs, Cape Town.  
TO: High Commissioner, London

12th January, 1948.

No. 25 SECRET (DOM)

Your 20, paragraph 2.

United Kingdom amendment agreed to and has been incorporated in proclamation.

Your paragraph 4. Owing to difficulty and uncertainty regarding landing operations, impossible to give days advance notification of promulgation of proclamation on islands. Commander of Gamtoos which leaves today, has instructions to promulgate proclamation as soon as possible after landing and to wireless immediately this has been done. On receipt of his message you will be informed at once.

Our No. 21 of 12/1 should be 23.

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No. 25 SECRET (DOM)

Your 20, paragraph 2.

United Kingdom amendment agreed to and has been incorporated in proclamation.

Your paragraph 4. Owing to difficulty and uncertainty regarding landing operations, impossible to give days advance notification of promulgation of proclamation on islands. Commander of Gamtoos which leaves today, has instructions to promulgate proclamation as soon as possible after landing and to wireless immediately this has been done. On receipt of his message you will be informed at once.

Our No. 21 of 12/1 should be 23.

Rainfall was small and occasional snow of short duration occurred. Air temperatures varied between limits of 39° and 46° F. and the sea temperature was practically constant at 40° F.

On the morning of 28th December a course was steered between the islands from West to East and the Northern coast of Marion Island examined for a possible landing place. On this coast the most prominent and remarkable feature is Boot Rock, which derives its name from its resemblance to a Wellington boot, and rises to a height of 250 feet above sea level. An examination of the coast from the ship revealed no sign of habitation nor could the charted landing place be identified. During the day the wind again increased to gale force and the ship was once more hove to. On 29th December a further examination of the coast of Marion Island was made and finally a sheltered cove to the East of the charted landing place was selected for the landing, and the ship anchored about a mile off shore. The name "Transvaal Cove" has been assigned to the landing place in the ship's log.

The Captain and a party drawn from the ship's company proceeded ashore, hoisted the Union Flag and deposited the annexation document in a brass cylinder. On his return to the ship the Captain decided that no further landings would be made that day.

Off the Northern coast of Marion Island there is a belt of kelp about 50-100 feet wide and 200 yards offshore. Owing to the difficulty of pulling a boat through the kelp with oars, a line was erected between the shore and an anchor seaward of the kelp, and the boats hauled through the kelp on the line. This was completed early on

SECRET



The contents of this telegram must be paraphrased if they are communicated to any person outside P. No. 102/24 Department.

TELEGRAM

FROM: Secretary for External Affairs, Cape Town.  
TO: High Commissioner, London

12th January, 1948.

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*How copies*

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Island, but on the expressed condition not to leave any trace of its visit".

"Discovered by a Frenchman,"

\* At the Conference on 2nd December, 1933, there were present inter alia the Permanent Secretary of the Academy of Sciences, the Director of the Museum of Natural History, representatives of the Hydrographic Services of the Ministry of Marine, of the National Meteorological Office, of the Institute of Oceanography, of the Office of Fisheries and of the Naval General Staff. The "Bougainville" visited the Island in January, 1939.

Extract from "Au Seuil de l'Antartique  
Croisière du 'Bougainville'" by Dr. René  
Jeannel: Paris: Editions du Muséum,  
57 rue Cuvier (ve), 1941:

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Page 25 (Translation). "Discovered by a Frenchman, Marion Island was described as a French possession on atlases prior to 1900; but it appears to have become British in consequence of recent activities. There does not appear, however, to have been any treaty signed on the subject nor has any mission made a formal act of taking possession.

It appears that somewhere about 1900 a French Minister declared, in passing, to the Chamber that the Republic had nothing to do with that lost island in the Southern seas. Since that date the island passed silently (sansbruit) under British influence; but it is curious that up to the present moment doubts still persist about its nationality.

The Colonial Administration does not count Marion Island among French possessions, for the "dependencies" of Madagascar comprise only the Crozete Islands, Kergulen, St. Paul and Amsterdam Islands. On the other hand, in marine circles there does not appear to be any certainty that the island has definitely been included within the British Empire. A discussion was held on this point during the meeting of the preparatory conference on the cruise of the "Bougainville". One frankly gathered the impression there that the persons present were far from being in agreement. Nevertheless it was decided that the "Bougainville" should call at the

/Island.....