
PUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENT

LEVERTON, B.J.T. (ed.) 1990. S.A. Archival Records: Important Cape Documents. Volume VI: Records of Natal, Vol III: August 1835 - June 1838. Pretoria : The Government Printer. 331 p.

The Series: This third volume of the record of Natal is a continuation of those printed in Volumes One and Two in this series and the user is referred to the first volume for full details concerning the history of this series of records, the policy adopted in connection with the choice of documents, the arrangement of the transcribed documents, the completeness of the collection, the table of contents and the footnoting policy adopted.

Contents of the Publication: The documents comprising Volume Two of this series of the *Records of Natal* concluded at the end of July 1835 at a stage when the consequences of the frontier war of that year were being considered at the Cape and when the possibilities of using Natal as a new place for white settlement again came to the fore. The story of Natal's relationship with the history of the Cape Colony is taken up again at this juncture. As the documents which go to make up this volume do not comprise a homogeneous whole but are merely subject orientated to the history of Natal for the period 1823-1838 it is not possible to give an overall insight to the contents. For this reason it is thought desirable to deal with the contents in chronological sequence, year by year, so that the user of the volume might thus become better acquainted with the events dealt with in the collection. It is hoped that this method will assist researchers in the handling of the documents here presented.

August 1835 to December 1835: In very general terms this period covers the first visit to Natal of captain Allen Gardiner, self appointed missionary to the tribes of the Zulus under Dingane. This results in Gardiner commencing his attempts to persuade the British government to interest itself on humanitarian grounds in Natal, and, incidentally, to give him some control over the British settlers resident at Port Natal.

1836: At the Cape the event of this year was the growing exodus of Dutch farmers from the Cape Colony across the Orange River. From the documents it becomes evident that a sizeable proportion of the emigrants were interested in proceeding to Natal. From the point of view of the British authorities the problem of colonial relationships with the tribes both within the Cape Colony and without its borders was highlighted by the House of Commons Select Committee¹ on the native tribes in South

¹ See documents Nos. 34 and 78 in this connection. Only those portions relative to Natal have been reproduced in this volume.

Africa, which committee generated some heat especially in connection with the commando system. An important indirect result of this committee was the subsequent law for the punishment of British subjects committing crimes beyond colonial boundaries. This had an especial importance for Natal and resulted in the government at the Cape, as also in London, having to pay far more attention to the progress of events in and around Natal. The appointment of Captain Gardiner as a Justice of the Peace for the Natal region was thus one of the first steps which led to enforced British interest in the area although the home authorities were decidedly reluctant to accept Natal as a colony of the Empire. This first British step was inevitably to lead to increased interest in Natal and a greater feeling of responsibility for the tribes there. The coming of Francis Owen as a second missionary to Zululand added yet another element to a complex situation.

1837: When the flow of Dutch emigrants to Natal became a reality to be reckoned with Captain Gardiner came to the realization that his position there was a most precarious one. He discovered what was already known in official circles - that his commission as Justice of the Peace at Natal was an illusory document which conferred upon him no real power. In his dealings with Dingane, Captain Gardiner is to a large degree outwitted by the black chief and Gardiner's search for political power brought about on the part of the British settlers at Port Natal a revulsion of feeling and a declaration of independence, an independence which was not recognised by the British authorities. The arrival of the Voortrekkers in Natal brought about an almost turbulent situation among the tribes in that territory and also in the trans-border region of the Cape Colony. To the authorities at the Cape this was a situation which obviously needed continued vigilance. At this juncture the Cape Town and London authorities succeeded in maintaining an attitude of seeming indifference to the progress of events in Natal and the policy was maintained of not considering the inclusion of Natal in the British Empire. At this time trade with Natal, though not forbidden, seems to have been discouraged.

1838: This year commences with news of the disasters which had struck the emigrant farmers in Natal. At first it is not clear whether the news is genuine but later the events are confirmed. The documents of this volume do not reflect a great deal of sympathy for the Boers in Natal on part of either the authorities at the Cape or in London although a general amnesty is proclaimed for those emigrants who returned to the Cape by the commencement of 1839. At this time official interest in Natal seems to have been mainly confined to ex-slaves (as apprentices) which the Voortrekkers were alleged to have taken with them to Natal. In June 1838 the Secretary of State

finally came to the conclusion - when it was too late - that the emigration from the Cape should be halted and that, if necessary, Natal should be occupied temporarily by British troops. When this volume closes in the middle of 1838 it is seriously thought at the Cape that many of the emigrants then in Natal might well leave that territory and return across the Drakenberg to live north of the Orange River.

This extensive publication comprises of detailed and interesting documents and letters concerning a specific period of time. A very useful reference book for the researcher interested in South African history.