

CONFIDENTIAL.

1928.

~~1927.~~

C.S.

No. *C/26/28*

S.ofS. Confidential.

SUBJECT.

1928.

28th September.

CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING "THE BYRD
ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION".

Previous Paper.

MINUTES.

1-11 S.ofS. Conf. despatch of 28th Sept. 1928

See

PMJ

13.12.28



Subsequent Paper.

$\frac{A}{1}$

Reference to previous correspondence:-

~~Secretary of State's Dispatch No. 10000 of the
Government~~

.....19.....



FALKLAND ISLANDS.
No. CONFIDENTIAL,.....

DOWNING STREET,

28th September,.....1928.

Sir,

for your information,
I have the honour to transmit to you the papers
noted below on the subject of the proposed aerial expedition
to the South Pole by Commander Byrd.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

THE OFFICER ADMINISTERING

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS.

L. S. AMERY.

Date.	Description.
1928.	
13th April.	From His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington. (with enclosure)
4th September.	To His Majesty's Representative at Washington.

Copy.

(W 3951/3951/50)

No. 802.

10
British Embassy,
Washington, D.C.

April 13th, 1923.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that Commander Byrd, the well known American aviator, is planning an expedition which will attempt to reach the South Pole with the help of an ice ship and aeroplanes. The expedition is expected to start late in August or early in September next, and I transmit herewith copy of a despatch which was addressed by the Air Attache to the Air Ministry on the 15th instant, containing a detailed report of the arrangements which are being made.

2. According to a statement which appeared in the Chicago Daily Tribune of April 11th, Commander Byrd announced on April 10th that his party would probably be composed as follows:

Mr. L. M. Gould of the University of Michigan, who will act as geologist and geographer.

Mr. Floyd Bennett, second in command and Chief Pilot.

Bert Balchen, who accompanied Commander Byrd on his trans-Atlantic flight.

Dr. Francis D. Coman of Johns Hopkins University, who will be physician and surgeon.

Thomas B. Mulroy, Chief Engineer.

Arthur T. Walden, who will be in charge of the dogs.

The Rt. Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain, K.G., M.P.,
etc., etc., etc.

E. J. Demas,

E. J. Demas, C. F. Gold, Joe De Ganahl,
Lloyd K. Granlie, C.L.Kessler, Charles E. Lofgren.

3. There has been no indication that Commander
Byrd's expedition is otherwise than of a purely
scientific character.

I have, etc.,

(For the Ambassador)

(Signed) H.G.CHILTON.

15th March, 1928.

The Byrd Antarctic Expedition.

The Byrd Antarctic Expedition which will attempt by means of aeroplanes to reach the South Pole will leave New York late in August or early in September.

The ship to carry the expedition is the SAMSON, a wooden ice-ship, 515 tons with a length of 170 feet, a beam of 31 feet, and a draught of 17 feet. The speed is eight knots under steam but auxiliary sails are carried. The party will consist of three aeroplanes, 75 dogs and a personnel of pilots, scientists, and crew of fifty five altogether, will sail for the Ross Ice Barrier to spend from three to fifteen months in the Antarctic region.

Commander Byrd hopes to reach the ice barrier about December 16th, but if he is delayed by the ice pack which lies outside Ross Sea, and which extends for hundreds of miles, it may be the first part of January before he can begin the work of establishing his first base. In any case he desires to make his flights and get out before winter sets in early in March and closes the line of retreat. If not he will winter, with about twenty-five men, on the ice barrier, sending the Samson back to New Zealand, and continuing his exploration when spring makes it possible.

During the period it is hoped that

communication

2

communication will be maintained with the United States. Two complete short-wave radio sets will be taken with the expedition, one for use on the ship and another for use on shore at the main base. An additional portable set will be taken to advance bases as it is needed and will be installed on the aeroplane with which most of the work of exploration will be done. The wireless sets are now being constructed by Captain S.C. Hooper, one of the Navy wireless experts.

Commander Byrd is of the opinion that there is much to be gained for science by the expedition. "There is much meteorological data to be obtained, which alone would justify the hazards encountered, for the weather of a large part of the world is affected by the Antarctic. The polar regions of the South affect weather even more than those at the North."

Most of the exploration work will probably be done to the east of the ice barrier and King Edward VII Land, as in the quadrant between that land, the pole and Charcot Land, there is a stretch of coast at least 2,000 miles long, which has never been seen behind which is a vast unknown territory.

Once ashore, the expedition will be divided into two parties. One will start work erecting three houses and getting the living and working quarters in order, while the other goes to work assembling the three planes which will be taken for exploration and freight service.

Subsequently, bases will be laid down towards the pole, not only to provide a source of supplies if a
machine

6

machine should be forced down and the crew have to sledge their way back, but also to offer jumping off places for side expeditions into the wilderness beyond King Edward VII Land and to the westward, should time permit.

These bases will first be found by dog sledge, and after a report is made as to the location of a suitable landing field an aeroplane will take supplies of food and fuel there. The bases will be laid down 100 miles apart as far as practicable, although Commander Byrd feels certain that the last will be this side of the great plateau which rises at latitudes 83 south and extends to the Pole itself, and beyond into an area which nobody has ever seen.

On the main flight to the Pole, it is probable that the plane itself will take off from the main base itself, and there will be little advantage in landing at the last base and reloading, only to consume a lot of fuel in climbing 12,000 feet with a heavy load so as to get over the edge of the plateau.

The primary purpose of these bases, however, will be to offer some security to the crew if they should have to come down and travel back from the plateau with a dog sled. It is proposed to carry dogs and a sled in the machine if possible.

Whether Commander Byrd will be able to land at the South Pole is problematical. The Pole is on a plateau more than 10,000 feet high and it will not be easy to land there even though the surface should be suitable. The landing speed at this height will be greater and a long run would be required in taking off.

Besides

Besides carrying dogs and sled on this dash to the Pole, a stove, sleeping bags, provisions for two months, and a special tent, skis, snowshoes and other necessary articles will be carried in the plane.

Three scientists will accompany the expedition: a geologist who will combine the functions of geographer and zoologist; a meteorologist; and an ichthyologist, who will also be an ornithologist. Five aeroplane pilots will be taken of which Commander Byrd himself will be one. Two doctors, two engine mechanics, and two wireless operators are included in the personnel. The captain of the Samson will be Oskar Wisting, who was captain of Amundsen's ship, the MAUD.

With regard to the aircraft to be taken; one machine will be a tri-motored Fokker, similar to the one flown over the North Pole; another will be a Bellanca single motor machine of the type which Chamberlain flew across the Atlantic; and a third which is to be a single motor machine, type as yet unsettled, for use in scouting expeditions and possibly for taxiing with loads across the snow.

In addition, seven tractors will be taken to pull the aircraft around on the snow.

The expedition will cost in the region of \$500,000 and is being very carefully outfitted and enough supplies will be taken to last the expedition two years.

Attached under Appendix (1) will be found a map of Commander Byrd's proposed route.

Wing Commander
Air Attache

COPY.

4

No. 1243

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

(W 7966/3951/50)

4th September, 1928.

Sir,

I have received Sir Esme Howard's despatch No. 802 of April 13th on the subject of the proposed aerial expedition to the South Pole by Commander Byrd.

2. Although, as Sir Esme observes, there is no indication that this expedition is otherwise than of a purely scientific character, it is possible that certain questions of sovereignty might arise out of any discoveries which may be made by the expedition in the areas in which, according to the sixth paragraph of the report by your air attaché enclosed in your despatch under reference, most of the exploration will be done.

3. The report of the committee of the Imperial Conference of 1926 which considered the question of British policy in the Antarctic contains certain recommendations for (i) the extension of the Ross and Falkland Islands dependencies eastward and westward respectively in such a manner as ultimately to include the whole section lying between the eastern boundary of the Ross Dependency and the western boundary of the Falkland Islands Dependencies, and (ii) the annexation of certain areas lying between the western boundary of the Ross Dependency and the eastern boundary of the Falkland Islands Dependencies. The report advised that this should be done first by despatching expeditions to these areas and subsequently by issuing letters patent in respect of them.

Henry G. Chilton, Esq., C.M.G.,
etc., etc., etc.,
Washington.

4.

4. While it has so far not been found possible to carry out these recommendations, His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia have lately proposed that, notwithstanding the failure hitherto to despatch an expedition, letters patent should be issued annexing certain areas in the Antarctic (which happen to be within the areas which may be explored by the Byrd expedition) and placing them under the administration of the Commonwealth Government. The areas in question are those mentioned on pages 33 and 34 of the summary of proceedings of the Imperial Conference of 1926, with the exception of the first, which it was contemplated would eventually be included within the Falkland Islands Dependencies. It was thought however that to issue letters patent claiming sovereign rights in these areas might only have the effect of drawing the attention of the government of the United States to them and might cause that government to think that the letters had been issued for the express purpose of preventing the expedition from laying claim to any hitherto undiscovered territory. It has been necessary therefore to inform the Commonwealth Government that the present moment is not altogether opportune for the issue of letters patent.

5. Though there are no grounds on which His Majesty's Governments concerned could object to this proposed aerial expedition to the South Pole, it nevertheless appears advisable to bring the rights and interests of those Governments in the areas which may be explored to the notice of the United States Government in order to avoid any difficulties which might subsequently arise out of a claim made by the United States

2

States Government to the possession of any hitherto undiscovered land lying within the area which the Imperial Conference recommended should be brought ultimately under British sovereignty. Perhaps the most tactful method of doing this will be to make an offer to afford any desired help to the expedition while it is in the Ross Dependency and in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. For your own information, I would explain that no similar offer can be made in respect of the areas described in paragraph 4 of this despatch, since in their case, unlike those of the two Dependencies just mentioned, which were annexed respectively by an Order-in-Council dated July 30th, 1923, and by letters patent dated July 21st, and modified on March 23rd, 1917, no formal action by way of annexation has been taken. Notwithstanding that fact it appears desirable, as already stated, to bring British rights and interests in those areas to the notice of the United States Government, as was done in the case of the Government of Norway in connexion with a recent Norwegian expedition. Copies of the note addressed for that purpose to the Norwegian Government and of their reply are enclosed for your information.

6. Unless, therefore, you see any objection I shall be glad if you will address to the United States Government a note intimating that His Majesty's Governments concerned understand that an American expedition is about to start on a voyage of scientific research in the Antarctic regions, and that they will watch its progress keenly on account of the interest which they themselves take in the regions mentioned

in

1

in the published summary of proceedings of the Imperial Conference, 1926, (c.f. p.p. 33-34) and in which they understand that the bulk of the research by Captain Byrd and his party is to be undertaken. You should add that His Majesty's Governments wish every success to the expedition, and that, if the United States Government so desire, instructions will be issued to the appropriate authorities to afford Captain Byrd every assistance in their power while the expedition is in the Ross Dependency and the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

7. A copy of the published summary of proceedings of the Imperial Conference, 1926, should be included in your note but not of course the enclosed copy of the report of the committee on British policy in the Antarctic which is for your confidential information only, as is also the attached chart of the areas in question.

I am &c.,

(For Lord C us hendun)

(Sgd.) R.H. CAMPBELL.