It is impossible to put into words the joy which broke out on every face at the cry of Land! Land!

Bellingshausen (1831)

Bellingshausen sent his last interim report (B9) by a fast packet boat from Rio, and it seems to have caught up with his previous one from Port Jackson (B8) at London. They arrived simultaneously at St Petersburg, where the Emperor had allowed his exhausted and recently widowed Minister of Marine, the indispensable 67-year-old Marquis de Traversay, to transfer his office permanently to his country villa. It was situated at Romanshchina near Luga, a small town standing in marshy country about 130km from the Admiralty and its Ministry. There ensued a flurry of couriers along the Smolensk road (T1), as the Minister prepared a report on the voyage, which might end at any moment. That document has also survived (de Traversay, 1821), but it is not translated here because it was largely based on Bellingshausen’s interim reports (B7, B8, B9), with a few details, such as the names of recent discoveries, added from the final report (B10),1 which the Minister received only a day or two before completing his summary on 9 August 1821.2

Not surprisingly, after what Bellingshausen and his clerk had been through by then, the report on the second Antarctic phase (B9) contained longitude sign errors. Most were put right in the final report (B10). That document, which has never been published before, amended many of the longitudes, named, and gave more precise positions for Peter I Island and the Alexander I Coast, and generally described the ice exploration of 1821 in greater detail. It also repeated Bellingshausen’s claim to have discovered the Elephant and Clarence Islands group. The group lies to the north-east of the South Shetlands,
and had been seen and Clarence Island visited by Smith and Bransfield in 1820, but Bellingshausen did not know that at the time.

B9: Seventh report

No. 1591 22 June 1821

To the Admiral and Minister of Marine, the noble Ivan Ivanovich, Marquis de Traversay, from the Commander of the sloops of the First Squadron.

REPORT

March 5th, 1821, Rio Janeiro

After completing the preparation of the two sloops of the First Squadron, Vostok and Mirnyi, at Port Jackson, the First Squadron weighed anchor on 31st October 1820 in order to make its second venture into the Southern Ice Ocean. To that end we took a route due south to begin with. On the way, on November 17th we sighted Macquarie Island, after surveying which I determined its location more precisely. We refilled our casks with water, and spent three days off the island under sail. From there we headed south again and met the first ice fields on November 28th at latitude 62º20′ S, longitude 164º E. Entering them, we continued the voyage in the Ice Ocean, for the most part among ice fields. We continued it in adverse weather, such as murk, fog, and snow, of which there is no shortage in those waters. Several times our approach towards the Pole was obstructed by heavy ice.

However on 11 January 1821,1 while tracing the limits of continuous ice, I encountered an island in latitude 69º, longitude 90º30′ E [W].2 It was completely covered in snow and ice and surrounded by several miles of continuous ice, and it was impossible to reach it.3

We met nothing until 17 January. But on that day in latitude 69º, longitude 73º E [W], in beautiful clear weather, we sighted a high cape trending north from a coast that was likewise covered in snow and ringed with continuous ice out to 40 miles [74km], which barred any further reconnaissance of it.4

I surveyed the newly discovered land called New Shetlandia from the south side, and found that it consists of several islands, like Zandwich5 Land which was discovered by Mr Cook.

On 27, 28 and 29th January we were engaged in surveying a group of islands which had not been seen by anyone before, so that I consider them to be another new discovery. Their longitude is 55º E [W], latitude 61º10′, in number seven islands.6

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1 Perhaps a nautical rendering of the afternoon of ship’s date 10 January 1821 (actually 9 January (O.S.)). It was amended to 10 January, the civil ship’s date, in the final report (B10) and in Two Seasons.
2 Samarov (1952) amended the longitude sign errors in this report without comment.
3 Peter I Island.
4 Alexander I Coast.
5 B9 and B10, in which this spelling accidentally reflected Bellingshausen’s German accent, seem to have been dictated to someone other than Rezanov.