

The Newcastle Chronicle
Saturday, March 28, 1874

ESCAPE OF SIX STATE PRISONERS FROM NEW CALEDONIA

Yesterday, the city was thrown into a state of some excitement by the arrival of the P.C.E. from New Caledonia, having on board six of the most prominent French State prisoners recently exiled to that colony.

The name of Henri Rochefort was in itself enough to cause excitement, on account of the important part he had taken in effecting the overthrow of the French Empire, and the position he occupied in the Government, which existed in Paris during the time it was ruled by the Commune.

How the prisoners escaped and got on board we are not informed; Captain Law does not appear to know how they got on board; but, once there, and he at sea, he had only to pursue his voyage, and an excellent one he had, having made the passage from Noumea in six days. It seemed as if the elements were in sympathy with these men, who, as their offences are only political, are free on British territory; and the people of Newcastle were quite as ready to accord them a hearty welcome, as was England to accord the perpetrator of the 2nd of December massacre a welcome, when driven from his Imperial throne in 1870. England asks no question as to the merits of the political differences that caused men who were in power to seek asylum on her soil. It is enough for her that men struggle for freedom – or what they may regard as their political rights – flee to her for refuge, and the protection of her powerful arm will be at once thrown around them.

The following are the names :

Henri Rochefort, journalist and member of the first Provisional Government.
Pascal¹ Grousset, Minister of Foreign Affairs.
Olivier Pain, Secretaire-General.
Francis Jourde, Minister of Finance.
Achille Bailliere, Aide de Camp to General Rossel.
Charles Bostiere Grandhille, Commandant de Bataillon.

It was somewhat singular that these men should arrive while all the vessels in the harbour were arrayed with a display of flags in honour of his Excellency the Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, who was expected hourly at the time.

H. Rochefort and two of his compatriots left by the Kembla, last night, for Sydney.

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1. *Sic.* His name was actually Jean-François-*Paschal* Grousset.