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**Frozen Empires: A History of the Antarctic Sovereignty Dispute
Between Britain, Argentina, and Chile, 1939-1959**

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Between Britain, Argentina, and Chile, 1939-1959**

by

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Abstract: This dissertation investigates the causes, development, and the partial resolution of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute that took place between Britain, Argentina, and Chile between 1939 and 1959. It has two interconnected arguments. The first argument is that the dispute had its roots in a clash between British imperialism and South American nationalism, and, as a consequence, ought to be seen as part of the wider history of European decolonization in the years during and after the Second World War. The second argument is that the history of the sovereignty dispute offers an excellent opportunity for “doing environmental history” due to the relative simplicity of human-nature-culture interactions in Antarctica. By putting these two arguments together, it becomes possible to write an “environmental history of decolonization.” Within the context of the sovereignty dispute, this dissertation asks the question: what happened to British imperial claims to “dominion over nature” during the decolonization of the British Empire in the

mid-twentieth century? Over the course of the sovereignty dispute, Argentina and Chile sought to challenge Britain's claims to "environmental authority" in Antarctica with their own "environmental nationalism." Rather than conceding to the South American challenge, Britain initially responded by redoubling its efforts to maintain Antarctic sovereignty. However, as the three countries learned more about the reality of the Antarctic environment, their political perceptions of the region changed. The British, in particular, became less attached to exclusive sovereignty and successfully negotiated a limited international regime that would retain their political influence without the need for formal control. The Antarctic Treaty of 1959 brought a partial end to the sovereignty dispute by "freezing" all sovereignty claims for its duration.

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Archival Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------|---|
| AGN | Argentine National Archives, Buenos Aires |
| ARNAD | Chilean National Archives, Santiago |
| BAS | British Antarctic Survey Archive, Cambridge |
| FIA | Falkland Islands Archive, Stanley |
| FRUS | <i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i> (Printed Documents) |
| RR.EE. | Chilean Foreign Ministry Archive, Santiago |
| MREYC | Argentine Foreign Ministry Archive, Buenos Aires |
| NSA | National Security Archive, Washington D.C. |
| RHL | Rhodes House Library, Oxford |
| SPRI | Scott Polar Research Institute Archives, Cambridge |
| TNA | The National Archives, London (Formerly PRO) |
| USNA | United States National Archive, College Park, MA |

Introduction: Imperialism on Ice

On 17 February 1948, the Chilean President, Gabriel González Videla, became the first head of state to visit Antarctica.¹ Speaking at Chile's *Base Soberanía* on Greenwich Island, he declared the Antarctic Peninsula region to be an "integral part" of Chile's national territory and lavished praise on the six "brave young men" who had endured the hardships of the previous winter at the base in order to demonstrate Chilean sovereignty.² On the following day, at the inauguration of a second Chilean station, *Base O'Higgins*, the President spoke of the spirit of Bernardo O'Higgins, the great liberator of Chile, and the need "to defend the sovereignty and unity of our territory, from Arica to the South Pole."³ Upon his return to Santiago, González Videla attacked Britain's over-lapping pretensions to the region. The British claims to the so-called "Falkland Islands Dependencies," thundered the President, were outdated vestiges of European colonialism:

We would deny our glorious history, we would deny our past, if we were to renounce a single piece of our territory, only because there are those [the British] who believe that acts of imperialism today constitute a title of sovereignty.⁴

¹ Gabriel González Videla, *Memorias*, 1. ed. (Santiago de Chile, 1975). 799.

² For an account of their year in Antarctica see Consuelo León Wöppke and Mauricio Jara Fernández, *Valientes Muchachos Vivencias en la Antártica Chilena en 1947* (Valparaíso, Chile, 2007).

³ González Videla, *Memorias*. 809.

⁴ *Ibid.* 826.

British claims to Antarctica represented an imperial imposition on Chile's national territory that all Chileans had a patriotic duty to oppose. The politics of anti-imperialism had arrived at the most unlikely of places.

During the Second World War both Chile and Argentina advanced sovereignty claims to the Peninsula region of the Antarctic continent, directly to the south of South America. These claims overlapped substantially with each other and with the British Empire's claims to sovereignty over a vast territory known as the Falkland Islands Dependencies.⁵ The over-lapping assertions of sovereignty led to an active three-way dispute that would last for the next twenty years. During this dispute, the three countries supported their rival claims by sending expeditions to Antarctica, constructing bases, launching diplomatic initiatives, disseminating cultural propaganda, searching for historical antecedents, and issuing legal protest notes. At the center of the dispute was a contest over "environmental authority," as Britain, Argentina, and Chile sought to appropriate the Antarctic environment itself for their own political ends. At several times between 1939 and 1959 the conflict threatened to turn violent, but the wider demands of international diplomacy just about prevented an armed confrontation. As the dispute progressed, increasing international interest in Antarctica, especially from the United States and the Soviet Union, culminated in the massive scientific research endeavor known as the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957-58. In December 1959, in the wake of the IGY, the signature of the Antarctic Treaty by twelve nations brought the Anglo-Argentine-Chilean dispute to a partial resolution through a "limited

⁵ In 1908, Britain had claimed the Antarctic Peninsula region by issuing Letters Patent (a form of government decree) that created an administrative unit, known as the Falkland Islands Dependencies. This original claim included a part of southern Patagonia. This "oversight" was corrected by the issue of a second Letters Patent in 1917.

internationalization” of the continent. For the duration of the Treaty, Article IV “froze” all existing sovereignty claims, neither recognizing them nor rejecting them (For the official text of the Antarctic Treaty see appendix).⁶

This dissertation sets out to explore the causes, development, and the partial resolution of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute between Britain, Argentina, and Chile. It has two interconnected arguments. The first is that the dispute had its roots in a clash between British imperialism and South American nationalism, and, as a consequence, ought to be seen as part of the wider history of European decolonization in the years during and after the Second World War. This places the history of the dispute at an analytical level beneath the Cold War contest between East and West that was taking place during the same period.⁷ This choice to focus on decolonization does not mean that the Cold War was unimportant to the history of the dispute. The history of the Cold War repeatedly interacted with the history of the sovereignty dispute: the Soviet Union, for example, attempted to take advantage of divisions between Britain, Argentina, and Chile within its anti-Western propaganda; fears of a permanent Soviet presence in Antarctica functioned as an important moderating influence in the dispute. Nevertheless, the prominent use of anti-imperial rhetoric, the relatively localized scale of the contest for Antarctic sovereignty, and the fact that the dispute took place between three countries that

⁶ The Antarctic Treaty was ratified in 1961 with an initial duration of 30 years. It was extended in 1991 by the Madrid protocol for a further 50 years and therefore remains in force today. The pun on the word “frozen” was used by diplomats at the time.

⁷ Several historians who have examined the history of Antarctica during this post-war period have seen it in terms of the Cold War struggle between East and West. See for example, Frank Klotz, *America on the ice: Antarctic policy issues* (Washington, DC, 1990). Jason Kendall Moore, "Diplomacy, Public Opinion and the 'Fractalization' of U.S. Antarctic Policy, 1946-1959" (University of Tasmania, 2006).

were nominal allies in the incipient Cold War, means that the wider context of European decolonization offers the most useful way of framing this history.

The second argument is that the history of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute offers an excellent opportunity for “doing environmental history.” Because of the relative simplicity of the environment, human-nature-culture interactions can be more easily understood in Antarctica than in places where there are more people and where the environment is more complicated. By adopting a three-fold approach to environmental history that takes into account human actions, human understanding, and the material environment, this dissertation seeks to give a prominent role both to the Antarctic environment and to changing perceptions of that environment within the history of the sovereignty dispute.⁸ It is a central proposition of this dissertation that the history of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute cannot be separated from the history of the Antarctic environment or from the history of Antarctic Science.

When these two arguments are put together, the history of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute opens up the possibility for writing an “Environmental History of Decolonization.” Many historians have examined the connections between empire, science, and the environment during the rise of European imperialism, and into the early twentieth century, but relatively few have investigated what happened to these connections during the mid twentieth century decline of European empires.⁹ This dissertation raises the question: what happened to British claims to “dominion

⁸ Donald Worster, *The Ends of the earth: perspectives on modern environmental history*, Studies in environment and history (Cambridge, 1988).

⁹ For an excellent discussion of the connections between empire, science, and the environment see William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and empire*, Oxford history of the British Empire companion series (Oxford ; New York, 2007). Even though Beinart and Hughes take their discussion into the post-colonial period, they do not really focus on the period of British decolonization. For a fuller discussion of the historiography of the environmental history of British imperialism see below.

over nature” during the period of decolonization? Britain legitimized its political claims to Antarctica through assertions of environmental authority; during the Antarctic sovereignty dispute, Argentina and Chile developed forms of “environmental nationalism” that challenged these assertions. This contest, however, was rooted in the material reality of the Antarctic environment. As the three sides competed to demonstrate their sovereignty they learned more about the reality of Antarctica. The environment itself played a direct role in this history, both as a constraining factor and, occasionally, as an active agent of change. By the late 1950s, in response to changing perceptions of the Antarctic environment, the British sought to reformulate their claims to environmental authority in order to retain political influence within an international treaty system. Argentina and Chile were reluctant collaborators in the negotiation of the Antarctic Treaty, but both South American countries found their political influence preserved by participation in its “exclusive club.”

A focus on science, the environment, and decolonization, in turn has important implications for the history of the origins of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty. There is a tendency within the existing historiography to view the limited internationalization of Antarctica through a somewhat idealistic lens. Historians such as Stephen Martin, Dian Olson Belanger, Stephen Pyne, and Tom Griffiths, have suggested that the Antarctic Treaty represented the triumph of science over politics, even to the extent of bringing the two Superpowers together at the height of the Cold War.¹⁰ By carefully examining the interaction of the environment, science,

¹⁰ Stephen Martin, *A history of Antarctica* ([Sydney, NSW], 1996). Dian Olson Belanger, *Deep Freeze: the United States, the International Geophysical Year, and the origins of Antarctica's age of science* (Boulder, Colo., 2006). Paul A. Berkman, *Science into policy: global lessons from Antarctica* (San Diego, Calif.; London, 2001). Stephen J. Pyne, *The ice* (London, 2003). Tom Griffiths, *Slicing*

and politics, this dissertation presents a slightly less idealized view of the origins of the Treaty. The scientific results of the IGY helped to convince Britain that the Antarctic Peninsula region was not worth the diplomatic and economic costs of maintaining exclusive sovereignty claims. British officials, in loose alliance with the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, then deliberately manipulated scientific goodwill in order to bring about a transfer from formal claims to informal influence through a limited international regime. Within the subsequent Antarctic Treaty System, science continues to function as the principal tool for the maintenance of the signatories' political interests. This more nuanced interpretation of the origins of the Treaty has important consequences: in a sense the Antarctic Treaty System itself can be seen as a "frozen empire."

During the Antarctic sovereignty dispute, the contest over the history of the region was every bit as intense as the contests over science, cartography, and effective occupation. Each side in the dispute looked to the Antarctic past in order to demonstrate its legitimate rights to sovereignty, and, conversely, to disprove the rights of the other two countries. The history of the region has consequently become a particularly politicized and legalistic history.¹¹ If ever the dispute were to go to

the silence: voyaging to Antarctica (Cambridge, Mass., 2007). Other historians have taken a less idealized approach to the connection between science and imperialism, see, for example, Peter Beck, *The international politics of Antarctica* (London, 1986). Klaus Dodds, *Pink ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (London; New York, 2002). But while these latter works have shown how politicians have exploited science and geography for their political ends, they do not fully explore the impact of science on politics.

¹¹ As a consequence of the sovereignty dispute, the history of the region has often been written by lawyers rather than historians. Examples of lawyers or diplomats writing history can be found on all three sides of the dispute. See for example, Oscar Pinochet de la Barra, *La Antártica Chilena* (Santiago de Chile, 1948). Juan Carlos Puig, *La Antártida argentina ante el derecho* (Buenos Aires, 1960). Eric William Hunter Christie, *The Antarctic problem; an historical and political study* (London, 1951). Such histories often focus teleologically on acts of discovery and administration in order to prove one particular point and usually lack any deep historical analysis of "why" claims were made when they were made, or what was intended by such actions. The classic example of this style of history writing comes from Argentine and Chilean assertions that the Spanish American Empire

arbitration, history would be used to help determine the outcome. The purpose of this dissertation is not to make a case for one particular side in the sovereignty dispute, but rather to explain why the question of Antarctic sovereignty became such a contentious issue in the 1940s and 1950s, why it took the form it did, and how and why it was partially resolved by the Antarctic Treaty of 1959. An implicit argument is that, while the historical background is obviously important to the sovereignty dispute as it developed between 1939 and 1959, the dispute was not an inevitable outcome of earlier events in Antarctica.¹² Rather, the “active phase” of the sovereignty dispute that took place between Britain, Argentina and Chile during and after the Second World War, originated out of the specific historical circumstances of the 1940s and 1950s and, most importantly, out of the complex interactions between British imperialism and South American nationalism.

included the Antarctica Peninsula, even though the Peninsula was only discovered after Argentina and Chile had declared themselves independent. Such a claim might be legally sound, but it is not necessarily good history.

¹² Even the chronology of this dissertation, focusing on the period 1939-1959, could be interpreted as a political statement about the ownership of the Antarctic Peninsula, since it reduces the importance of the historical antecedents.

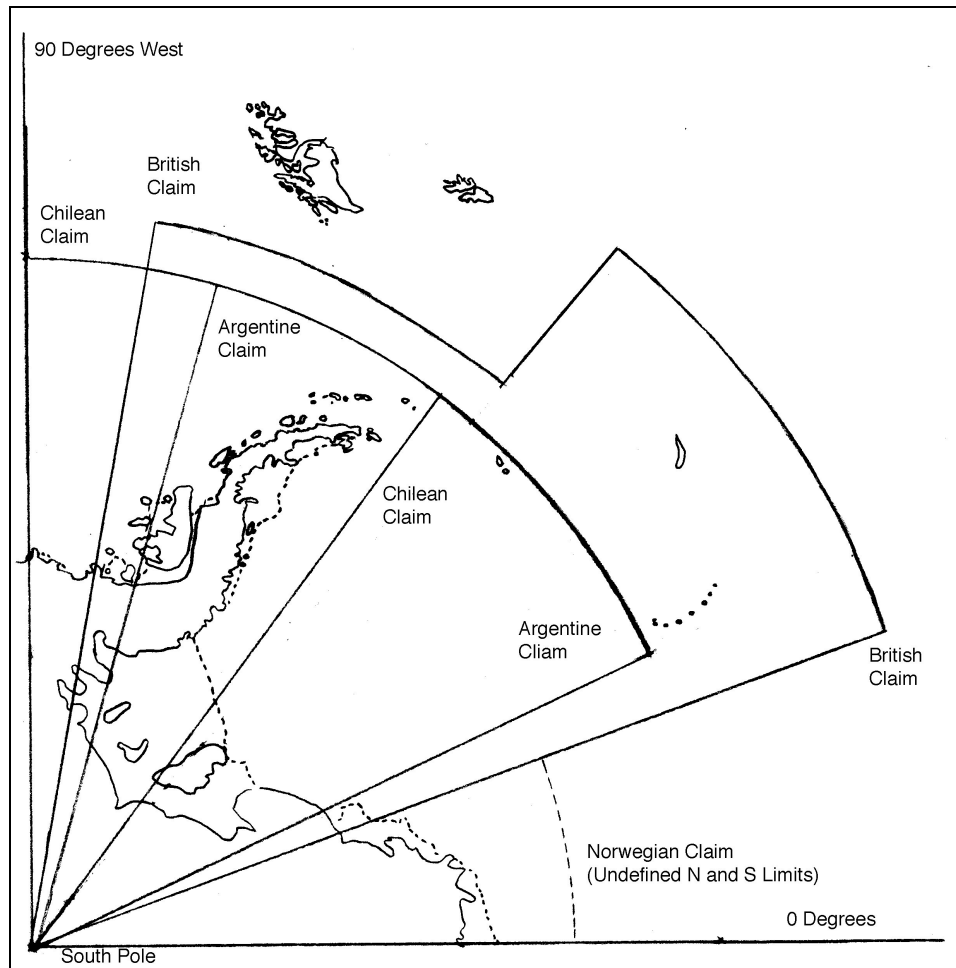


Figure 1: Sketch Map to show sovereignty claims in Antarctic Peninsula region.

BRITISH ANTARCTIC IMPERIALISM

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, Antarctica remained a purely hypothetical continent: geographers believed in its existence, but nobody had ever seen it. In the late eighteenth century, Captain Cook became the first man to sail south of the Antarctic circle, but he failed to set eyes on the continent.¹³ Around

¹³ The classic account of Cook's voyages can be found in J. C. Beaglehole, *The life of Captain James Cook* (Stanford, Calif., 1974).

1820, a number of expeditions made the first sightings of land in the far south.¹⁴ Several of these expeditions were connected to the rapacious sealing industry, which was creating an “exploitation frontier” in the South Atlantic.¹⁵ These discoveries aroused some excitement, not least during the “magnetic crusade” of the mid-nineteenth century, when expeditions set off in search of the south magnetic pole. But this interest quickly subsided. For almost a century, the newly discovered territories defied the process of European imperial expansion that was going on in much of the rest of the world. There was little to attract colonists to the icy shores, and much to defy them. The same environmental conditions that had prevented the discovery of Antarctica for such a long time continued to repel explorers and would-be settlers. Antarctica contained no indigenous population, and – after the rapid extermination of most of the region’s accessible seal populations – little of any apparent economic worth.

From the early twentieth century, however, the history of Antarctica became increasingly caught up with the wider history of the British Empire. “Empire”, “imperialism”, and “colonialism” are ideologically charged terms that are difficult to define.¹⁶ The meaning of these words changes radically from place to place, time to time, and from one ideological position to the next. The British Empire itself defied neat definitions. Rather than being a coherent ideological enterprise, the British

¹⁴ There remains no consensus on exactly who discovered what, and when. For an Argentine perspective on the discovery of Antarctica see Ernesto J. Fitte, *El descubrimiento de la Antártida* (1962). Also see C. W. Poynter, R. J. Campbell, and Jay I. Kislak, *The discovery of the South Shetland Islands: the voyages of the Brig Williams, 1819-1820 as recorded in contemporary documents and the journal of Midshipman C.W. Poynter* (London, 2000).

¹⁵ Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological imperialism: the biological expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, Studies in environment and history (Cambridge; New York, 1986).

¹⁶ For a recent discussion of the difficulties involved in defining such terms see Barbara Bush, *Imperialism and postcolonialism*, 1st ed., History: concepts, theories and practice (Harlow, England; New York, N.Y., 2006).

Empire was in fact a menagerie of contrasting constitutional arrangements. If not quite acquired in a “fit of absence of mind,” the various constituents of the British Empire were in fact attained at different times and for different purposes, and governed in quite different manners.¹⁷ To make the situation even more complicated, some historians have suggested that the formal empire of territories painted pink on imperial maps was only the “tip of the iceberg” and that the British Empire in fact extended to a vast “informal empire” of free trade and political influence.¹⁸ Seen from the perspective of “informal imperialism”, it is possible to classify both Argentina and Chile as parts of Britain’s imperial system at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁹ At a general level, this dissertation adopts a broad definition of the British Empire as a system of unequal power relationships, in which Great Britain was clearly dominant. Since this imperial system included both formal and informal empire, British “imperialism” did not consist solely in the acquisition of territory or the government of foreign peoples. Within this imperial

¹⁷ John Robert Seeley, *The expansion of England: two courses of lectures* (London, 1883).

¹⁸ Ronald Robinson and Jack Gallagher, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review* VI (1953).

¹⁹ The literature on British influence in Argentina and Chile is fairly extensive. See, for example, Harold Blakemore, *British nitrates and Chilean politics, 1886-1896: Balmaceda and North* (London, 1974). H. S. Ferns, *Britain and Argentina in the nineteenth century* (Oxford [Eng.], 1960). Carlos Escudé, *Gran Bretaña, Estados Unidos y la Declinación Argentina 1942-1949* (Buenos Aires, 1983), microform. Andrew Graham-Yooll, *The forgotten colony: a history of the English-speaking communities in Argentina*, Rev. ed. (Buenos Aires, República Argentina, 1999). Roger Gravil, *The Anglo-Argentine connection, 1900-1939*, Dellplain Latin American studies (Boulder, 1985). C. A. M. Hennessy and John King, *The Land that England lost : Argentina and Britain, a special relationship* (London, 1992). Rodolfo Irazusta and Julio Irazusta, *La Argentina y el imperialismo británico; los eslabones de una cadena, 1806-1833* (Buenos Aires, 1934). Rory Miller, *Britain and Latin America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (London; New York, 1993). Mario Rapoport, *Gran Bretaña, Estados Unidos y las clases dirigentes argentinas, 1940-1945*, Colección Conflictos y armonías en la historia argentina (Buenos Aires, República Argentina, 1981). Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz, *Política británica en el Río de la Plata; las dos políticas: la visible y la invisible*, Cuadernos de F.O.R.J.A., (Buenos Aires, 1936).

system each constituent part had its own specific characteristics, and it is in the details rather than the generalities that most of the interest lies.

In 1908 the British issued a Letter Patent (a form of government decree) that made provisions for the administration of the Antarctic Peninsula region as the Falkland Islands Dependencies:

Whereas the group of islands known as South Georgia, the South Orkneys, the South Shetland Islands, and the Sandwich Islands, and the territory known as Graham Land, situated in the South Atlantic Ocean to the south of the 50th Parallel of South latitude, and lying between the 20th and 80th degrees of West longitude, are part of our Dominions, and it is expedient that provision should be made for their government as Dependencies of our Colony of the Falklands.²⁰

Since 1833, Britain had held possession of the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic, after the forceful seizure of the archipelago from the government of Buenos Aires.²¹ Henceforth, the British would also consider the Antarctic Peninsula region to be a formal part of the British Empire: a legal, political, and economic part of an imperial system that was already the largest in the world. Unusually, since Antarctica contained no indigenous population, Britain's "Frozen Empire" in the far south involved the exercise of sovereignty over territory but not people. Antarctica really was the *terra nullius* of settler colonial fantasy.²² This was undoubtedly an

²⁰ Christie, *The Antarctic problem; an historical and political study*. 301.

²¹ Barry M. Gough, *The Falkland Islands/Malvinas: the contest for empire in the South Atlantic* (London, 1992).

²² Throughout the colonial period, settler-colonists repeatedly used the myth of empty lands to justify the appropriation of territory and the extermination of indigenous peoples. See, for example, Patrick Wolfe, *Settler colonialism and the transformation of anthropology: the politics and poetics of an ethnographic event*, Writing past colonialism series (London ; New York, 1999).

anomalous situation, but perhaps, on close inspection, no more anomalous than any other constituent part of the vast imperial system.

The principal motivation for Britain's claim to Antarctica was economic. The British Government wanted to tax and regulate the nascent whaling industry. Beginning in the 1890s, whaling companies had begun to show an increasing interest in the marine wealth of the seas and oceans surrounding Antarctica.²³ With whale populations in the northern hemisphere devastated by over-fishing, the Norwegians in particular began to establish whaling factories on South Georgia and other sub-Antarctic Islands. These operations proved remarkably successful and radically changed perceptions of the economic worth of Antarctica. What had recently been considered nothing but a wasteland began to be seen as a potentially valuable territory worth controlling. By the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the Antarctic whaling had become a significant industry, with the Norwegian catch alone worth over £2 million annually.²⁴ Between 1919 and 1931 the Falkland Islands Dependencies collected a little over £1 million in duty.²⁵

Alongside Britain's economic motives for claiming the Falkland Islands Dependencies, there was also a growing emotional attachment to the region. In 1895, the Sixth International Geographical Congress held in London had ushered in the so-called "heroic era" with its provocative resolution that "the exploration of Antarctic regions is the greatest piece of geographical exploration still to be undertaken."²⁶ Delegates at the Congress viewed the almost complete lack of

²³ J. N. Tønnessen and Arne Odd Johnsen, *The history of modern whaling* (Berkeley, 1982).

²⁴ See *Ibid.* 305. For example, the catch value of the Norwegian fleet in 1914 was £2m. See also Gerald Elliot, *A whaling enterprise: Salvesen in the Antarctic* (Wilby, Norwich [U.K.], 1998). 19.

²⁵ Tønnessen and Johnsen, *The history of modern whaling*. 302.

²⁶ G. E. Fogg, *A history of Antarctic science*, Studies in polar research (Cambridge [England]; New York, 1992). 110.

knowledge about the Southern Continent as an affront to civilization. For ambitious European explorers, Antarctica's environmental hostility suddenly became part of its attraction: it offered the perfect stage on which to prove to the world their masculinity and racial superiority.²⁷ Antarctica came to occupy a special place in both the official mind and the popular imagination of British imperialism, and the names of Robert Falcon Scott and Ernest Shackleton etched themselves into the imperial pantheon.²⁸ In the summer season of 1911-12, the heroic era climaxed with the famous "Race for the Pole" between the Norwegian Roald Amundsen and the British Captain Robert Falcon Scott.²⁹ Proficient on skis, and utilizing dog transport to its fullest potential, the Norwegian team arrived at the Geographical South Pole on 14 December 1911.³⁰ By the time Scott and his four companions had reached the Pole over a month later, Amundsen had already arrived safely back to his base camp. Exhausted and out of food, Scott and his men died on the return journey.³¹ When the "sublime sacrifice" of Captain Scott and his men was reported to the world a year later it struck a resonant chord with the pre-First World War imperial spirit, nurtured on ideals of muscular Christianity and the white man's burden.³² Nothing quite

²⁷ Brigid Hains, *The ice and the inland: Mawson, Flynn, and the myth of the frontier* (Carlton South, Vic., 2002). Max Jones, *The last great quest: Captain Scott's Antarctic sacrifice* (Oxford; New York, 2003).

²⁸ See for example Jones, *The last great quest: Captain Scott's Antarctic sacrifice*.

²⁹ The primary and secondary literature on the race to the South Pole is immense. One of the classic works is Roland Huntford, *Scott and Amundsen*, 1st American ed. (New York, 1984).

³⁰ The Norwegian Party consisted of Amundsen, Bjaaland, Wisting, Sverre Hassel, and Helmer Hansen.

³¹ Scott, Oates, Bowers, Wilson, and Evans. The British team had hoped to use horses to pull their sleds, but the horses could not cope with the extreme conditions, and the five men ended up having to man-haul across the polar plateau.

³² Spufford argues that the romantic quest for the sublime lay at the heart of the British fascination with cold places. Francis Spufford, *I may be some time: ice and the English imagination* (London; Boston, 1996). For the impact that Scott's tragic failure had on the English population see, Jones, *The last great quest: Captain Scott's Antarctic sacrifice*.

captured the British popular imagination as much as Titus Oates' understated self-sacrifice: "I'm stepping outside. I may be some time."³³ Nurtured by such stories, the very remoteness of Antarctica gave the continent a great symbolic value to an imperial mentality that longed to rule the world.³⁴ The empty white spaces offered the imperialist much of the glory of empire without the messy reality of ruling a colonial people.

In 1919, Leopold Amery, under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, declared his intention to bring the whole of Antarctica into the British Empire.³⁵ Amery's interest in the region rested on a combination of fact and fiction: the wealth of whaling, the prestige of exploration, and the potential for finding great mineral wealth. At this time very little was known about the Antarctic environment and this void tended to be filled with dreams of a "Frozen *El Dorado*." At the Imperial Conference of 1926 Amery's plan became imperial policy: the Antarctic continent was to be incorporated, piece-by-piece, into the British Empire.³⁶ Britain's desire to possess Antarctica perhaps represented the apogee of European imperial desires to control space and nature. In fulfilling its imperial aspirations in Antarctica, Britain relied on its Southern Dominions.³⁷ New Zealand made a claim in 1924 to the Ross

³³ British commentators at the time, deeply worried about the turn of world events in the lead up to the First World War, drew hope from the bravery displayed in the face of tragedy. See, Beck, *The international politics of Antarctica*. 26.

³⁴ See Peter Beck, "Securing the Dominant 'Place in the Wan Antarctic Sun' For the British Empire: the Policy of Extending British Control Over Antarctica," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 29 (1983). Leopold Amery was the leading proponent of British territorial acquisition in Antarctica. Such "futile and ironic" ambition might arguably deserve a place alongside Ronald Hyam's five "flawed projects of empire." Ronald Hyam, *Britain's declining empire: the road to decolonisation, 1918-1968* (Cambridge; New York, 2006).

³⁵ Peter Beck, "British Antarctic Policy in the Early Twentieth Century," *Polar Record* 21 (1983).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ See Peter Beck, Beck, "Securing the Dominant 'Place in the Wan Antarctic Sun' For the British Empire: the Policy of Extending British Control Over Antarctica." For the importance of the White Dominions on British Antarctic policy at a later stage see Klaus Dodds, "The End of a Polar Empire?"

Dependency, and in 1931 Australia claimed a vast swath of East Antarctica. A French claim to a small sliver of Terre Adélie in 1925, however, prevented the British Empire from fulfilling its continental ambition. Nevertheless by the eve of the Second World War, two thirds of Antarctica would be painted pink on imperial maps.

Along with assertions of prior discovery, acts of possession, and administration, Great Britain justified its claims to Antarctic sovereignty through recourse to “environmental authority.”³⁸ Building on a declensionist narrative of environmental degradation, which drew in particular upon the devastation wreaked by the nineteenth century sealing industry, British officials argued that they best had the scientific and administrative skills to manage the whaling industry.³⁹ Sir Miles Clifford, the Governor of the Falkland Islands from the mid 1940s, made the case explicitly:

The only true wealth that this area contains, so far as we know today, is still as in the past its marine wealth – its whales and seals; these, as we have noted earlier, could readily be exterminated by indiscriminate killing and it was the recognition of this danger which decided His Majesty’s Government to bring these industries under control and lead to the establishment of British sovereignty over the area now known as the Falkland Islands Dependencies. *The motive was a purely unselfish one, to conserve the harvest of these seas for the benefit of mankind as a whole, “for the good of humanity.”*⁴⁰

The Falkland Islands Dependencies and Commonwealth Reactions to British Polar Policy, 1945-61," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 24 (1996).

³⁸ See, for example, the case made by Britain in International Court of Justice, *Antarctica cases (United Kingdom v. Argentina; United Kingdom v. Chile): orders of March 16th, 1956: removal from the list* (Hague, 1956).

³⁹ For a discussion of the use of degradation narratives in another colonial situation see Diana K. Davis, *Resurrecting the granary of Rome: environmental history and French colonial expansion in North Africa*, Ohio University Press series in ecology and history (Athens, 2007).

⁴⁰ Miles Clifford “Broadcast Address by His Excellency the Governor,” 22 February 1948. RHL, MISS. Brit Emp.s 517 4/1 “Falkland Islands 1946-1957: Clifford.” [Italics added].

This argument set up something of a “Tragedy of the Commons” scenario, whereby ownership by one country was better than an international free-for-all.⁴¹ British officials implied that the superior capacity to understand the Antarctic environment that they possessed by virtue of their scientific institutions and administrative experience, gave them both a right and a duty to claim possession of the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

Britain’s claims to environmental authority assumed that the theory and practice of science was the best means of understanding the natural world. Science is both a body of knowledge and a methodology, which generally relies upon empirical observation and experiment. By the middle of the twentieth century, an established international community of scientists generally agreed on the correct way to “do science”, thereby setting the rules of the game. By performing what they claimed to be “superior” science in Antarctica, the British asserted their environmental authority. Science, they argued, gave them the ability to control and regulate the Antarctic environment “for the good of humanity,” and this in turn provided a moral justification for their sovereignty claims. Definitions of science, however, were not uncontested. Not all scientists thought about what they were doing in the same way, and politicians, officials, and the general public often had a different understanding of science than scientists themselves. During the Antarctic sovereignty dispute, certain South Americans would define “science” in a significantly different way to the British understanding of the term. The contest over

⁴¹ Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162 (1968).

the definition of science would play a part in the Argentine and Chilean challenge to Britain's claims to environmental authority in Antarctica.

In order to demonstrate Britain's environmental authority, the Colonial Office initiated a project of oceanographic research known as the Discovery Expeditions. Between 1926 and 1938, the vessels of the Discovery Committee made a series of research voyages around the Antarctic continent, funded by taxes on the whaling industry.⁴² British scientists investigated the marine life of the Antarctic oceans, counted whales, measured temperatures and charted ocean currents. "The direct object of this detailed research," a Colonial Office Report claimed, "was to acquire the information necessary to formulate sound legislation for the proper control of whaling and sealing."⁴³ As well as providing a moral justification for Britain's rule, such investigations produced useful information that helped to facilitate this rule. Greater knowledge about the whale populations, for example, could make the whaling industry more efficient and add to the tax revenues collected by the government of the Falkland Islands Dependencies.⁴⁴ The Discovery Investigations, along with other scientific endeavors such as the establishment of the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge in 1920, and the Rymill expedition to Grahamland between 1935-38, helped to establish a strong connection between science and politics in Antarctica.

⁴² Ann Savours and Margaret Slythe, *The voyages of the Discovery: the illustrated history of Scott's ship* (London, 2001).

⁴³ Colonial Office Paper: "The Falkland Islands Dependencies: Basis of the British claim. 29/12/1948." TNA, CO 78/245/3.

⁴⁴ Despite these lofty ambitions, many whalers were unimpressed by the work of the Discovery investigations, and the Norwegians in particular saw through the political motivations, see Elliot, *A whaling enterprise: Salvesen in the Antarctic*. 23. Harold Salvesen, the British director of the Salvesen whaling company, would later condemn the Discovery Expeditions: "the whole business has been conducted most inefficiently and at a criminal cost."

Britain's appeals to environmental authority to support its sovereignty claims in the Falkland Islands Dependencies mirrored a similar strategy throughout its empire. The imperial history of Antarctica fits neatly into a broad and growing literature that explores the relationships between empire, science and the environment.⁴⁵ Building on the seminal idea of "improvement," many authors have argued that science gave the British Empire a means of building and legitimizing their empire.⁴⁶ Science provided imperialists with both the practical tools to win, govern and exploit their empires and a moral justification for their actions. Sometimes, as in the case of geography and anthropology, imperialists even "invented" entire scientific disciplines to serve their imperial purposes.⁴⁷ By the late 1930s, Britain's sovereignty claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies epitomized the broader assumptions of environmental authority throughout the empire.

⁴⁵ For an excellent historiographical essay on this theme see Roy MacLeod, "Introduction" in Roy M. MacLeod, *Nature and empire: science and the colonial enterprise* (Chicago, 2000). Other important works in the environmental history of British imperialism include Richard Harry Drayton, *Nature's government: science, imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven, 2000). Richard Grove, *Green imperialism: colonial expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of environmentalism, 1600-1860*, 2 vols., Studies in environment and history (Cambridge, 1994). Richard Grove, *Ecology, climate, and empire: colonialism and global environmental history, 1400-1940* (Cambridge, 1997). John M. MacKenzie, *The empire of nature: hunting, conservation, and British imperialism* (Manchester; New York, 1988). David Arnold, *The problem of nature: environment, culture and European expansion* (Oxford, [Eng.]; Cambridge, Mass., 1996). Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin, *Ecology and empire: environmental history of settler societies* (Seattle, Wash., 1997). Peder Anker, *Imperial ecology: environmental order in the British Empire, 1895-1945* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001). Daniel R. Headrick, *The tools of empire: technology and European imperialism in the nineteenth century* (New York, 1981).

⁴⁶ Drayton, *Nature's government: science, imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World*.

⁴⁷ Anne Godlewska and Neil Smith, *Geography and empire* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass., 1994). Felix Driver, *Geography militant: cultures of exploration in the age of empire* (Oxford, 1999).

SOUTH AMERICAN ANTARCTICA

In Argentina and Chile, the history of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute was closely connected with the development of nationalism in both countries. Nationalism, like imperialism, is a notoriously difficult term to define.⁴⁸ The meaning and connotations of “nation” and “nationalism” change with time, as does the relationship between these two ideas.⁴⁹ The term “South American nationalism” is used in this dissertation as a collective for the various ideologies calling themselves nationalist, which existed in Argentina, Chile, and other countries in the region during the middle decades of the twentieth century.⁵⁰ “Argentine nationalism” and “Chilean nationalism” were contested terms: not only did Argentine nationalism compete with Chilean nationalism and vice-versa, but also various strands of Argentine and Chilean nationalism competed internally with each other. Over the course of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute, governments in Buenos Aires and Santiago attempted, with some success, to harness the question of Antarctic sovereignty to a unifying idea of national identity. Argentines and Chileans had not always felt so strongly about Antarctica, but between 1939 and 1959, the fact that the

⁴⁸ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines nationalism as: “Advocacy of or support for the interests of one's own nation, esp. to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations. Also: advocacy of or support for national independence or self-determination.” It defines nation, most broadly as: “A people or group of peoples; a political state.”

⁴⁹ Despite an extensive literature, there are no universally accepted definitions of the terms “nationalism” and “nation.” See, for example, Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of nationalism*, Harper torchbooks (New York, 1972). Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, New perspectives on the past (Ithaca, 1983). Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London, 1983). Umut Özkirimli, *Contemporary debates on nationalism: a critical engagement* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, 2005).

⁵⁰ For a specific discussion of nationalism in Latin America, see Sarah A. Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood, *Remaking the nation: place, identity and politics in Latin America* (London; New York, 1996). For a discussion of the literature on Latin American nationalism, see Nicola Miller, “The historiography of nationalism and national identity in Latin America,” *Nations and Nationalism* 12 (2006).

Antarctic Peninsula belonged to Argentina or Chile became a fact that could be agreed upon by a significant number – perhaps even a large majority – of Argentines and Chileans. Such sentiments might be termed “territorial nationalism,” and in Argentina these feelings became closely connected with the irrendenta of *Las Malvinas*.⁵¹ By the end of the 1950s, such passionate beliefs would make any resolution of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute extremely difficult.

The countries that would become Argentina and Chile gained their independence from Spain at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the wars for independence, armies from both sides of the Andes Mountains fought together against Spanish loyalists. But despite the existence of vague hopes for continental unity, separate “Nation States” became the norm throughout South America. As Argentines and Chileans attempted to create distinct national identities, they sought to distance themselves from each other. Since they shared a similar religion, culture, language, ethnic-composition and history, environmental differences were among the few traditional markers of national identity that distinguished the two countries. The idea of territory and territorial integrity consequently played a central role in defining Argentine and Chilean national identities.⁵² The Andes Mountains, for example, formed a looming frontier that added a sense of “natural difference” to their imagined communities.⁵³

⁵¹ Carlos Escudé, *La patología del nacionalismo argentino* (Argentina, 1991).

⁵² This is demonstrated by the popularity of “geo-politics” in both countries. See, for example, Klaus Dodds and David Atkinson, *Geopolitical traditions: a century of geopolitical thought*, Critical geographies (London; New York, 2000).

⁵³ Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*.

For the first century after independence, territorial expansionism characterized the histories of both Argentina and Chile.⁵⁴ Alongside the internal consolidation of their own territories, the two countries looked outwards with a view to enlarging their frontiers. This expansionism brought the neighboring countries into competition, and the subsequent rivalry further helped to forge the developing sense of Argentine and Chilean national identity. Following a protracted war against Paraguay, Argentina consolidated its possession of the Misiones and Chaco provinces in the north. Then, after a genocidal war against the indigenous populations of the south, the Argentine state expanded into the vast Patagonian region on the eastern side of the Andes. To the west, Chile gained control of the valuable nitrate fields of the Atacama Desert, took possession of Easter Island in the Pacific Ocean, and also expanded southwards into western Patagonia. The combined Argentine and Chilean conquest of Patagonia, in particular, can be seen as a continental expansion similar to that of the United States into the West.⁵⁵ Social Darwinism provided an ideology for this South American expansionism, and from a certain perspective – defining imperialism as the assertive actions of a dominant power in an unequal relationship – then this expansionism might itself be described as a form of imperialism.⁵⁶ But unlike the British, few Argentines or Chileans considered their activities to be explicitly imperial. In fact, in a similar fashion to the United States, a deep sense of anti-imperialism shaped the national identities of

⁵⁴ For good general histories of Argentina and Chile, see respectively, David Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987: from Spanish colonization to the Falklands War and Alfonsín* (London, 1987), and Simon Collier and William F. Sater, *A history of Chile, 1808-2002*, 2nd. ed., Cambridge Latin American studies (Cambridge [England]; New York, N.Y., 2004).

⁵⁵ C. A. M. Hennessy, *The frontier in Latin American history*, *Histories of the American frontier* (Albuquerque, 1978).

⁵⁶ Evelyn Fishburn and Eduardo L. Ortiz, *Science and the creative imagination in Latin America* (London, 2005).

Argentina and Chile due to their formation in the independence struggles against Spanish colonialism.

Over time, the Governments of Argentina and Chile began to show a certain interest in the Peninsula region of Antarctica, directly to the south of South America. This interest can be seen as a continuation of the expansionist post-colonial histories of the two countries, and of the rivalry between them. In the early nineteenth century, Argentine and Chilean citizens had played some role in the self-destructive sealing industry, but this participation went largely undocumented.⁵⁷ It was only at the very end of the nineteenth century, with the advent of Antarctic whaling and the beginning of the heroic era, that the two countries began to take a more public interest in Antarctica. In 1904, Argentine capital founded the Pesca whaling company that operated out of South Georgia.⁵⁸ This was the first commercial whaling company to operate in the Antarctic region. Chileans founded a company to operate from Deception Island although it was less successful and would later be taken over by a Norwegian company. Both of these enterprises served to demonstrate active Argentine and Chilean interest in the region.

Although neither Argentina nor Chile played a direct role in the heroic era of Antarctic exploration with expeditions of their own, both countries were caught up in the excitement of the times. Several expeditions stopped at Buenos Aires or Valparaíso on their way to and from Antarctica. The Swedish expedition of Otto Von Nordenskjöld particularly caught the Argentine imagination, partly because one

⁵⁷ Due to the clandestine nature of sealing, in which knowledge of seal colonies tended to be kept a closely guarded secret, this interest went largely undocumented.

⁵⁸ Ian B. Hart, *Pesca: the history of Compañía Argentina de Pesca Sociedad Anónima of Buenos Aires: an account of the pioneer modern whaling and sealing company in the Antarctic*, Rev. ed. (Salcombe, 2002).

of the participants was the Argentine José María Sobral.⁵⁹ When Nordenskjöld's ship the *Antarctic* became trapped in the ice, the Argentine government dispatched one of its naval vessels the *Uruguay* under the command of Irizar to rescue the stranded expedition.⁶⁰ The rescue mission was a success and the *Uruguay* received a hero's welcome upon its return to Buenos Aires. Several years later, in 1916, it would be Chile's turn to take part in a similar drama with the rescue of the crew of Ernest Shackleton's wrecked *Endurance*. Captain Prado sailed the *Yelcho* to Elephant Island on the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, famously saving every single member of Shackleton's expedition.⁶¹

One year after the rescue of Nordenskjöld, the Argentine government took over the running of a meteorological station on Laurie Island in the South Orkneys, which had recently been constructed by the Scottish explorer William Speirs Bruce.⁶² Since the British Government showed no interest in its upkeep, Bruce offered the station to the Argentine government. Vaguely aware of the connections between the weather and climate of southern Argentina and the weather and climate of Antarctica, the Argentine government of General Julio A. Roca accepted the offer. An annual relief expedition maintained a small meteorological observation party on the remote island. For almost forty years this station would be the most southerly part of the world to be permanently occupied, and the station produced the longest continuous series of meteorological readings from the Antarctic region. The

⁵⁹ See, José M. Sobral and Jorge Rabassa, *Dos años entre los hielos, 1901-1903* (Buenos Aires, 2003). Laurio Hedelvio Destéfani, *El alférez Sobral y la soberanía argentina en la Antártida* (Buenos Aires, 1974).

⁶⁰ *La Argentina en los mares antárticos*, (Buenos Aires, 1903). Laurio Hedelvio Destéfani, *100 años de un rescate épico en la Antártida: Nordenskjöld, Sobral, Irizar* (Buenos Aires, 2003).

⁶¹ Alfred Lansing, *Endurance; Shackleton's incredible voyage*, [1st ed. (New York, 1959). In general the Chilean role in the rescue is not given much prominence in the English language literature.

⁶² P. Speak, *William Speirs Bruce: polar explorer and Scottish nationalist* (Edinburgh, 2003).

maintenance of this station would later prove very useful in demonstrating Argentina's legal "effective occupation" of at least one part of the Antarctic Peninsula region.⁶³

In the face of potential rivalry in Antarctica, representatives from the Argentine and Chilean governments held meetings in 1906 and 1908 in an attempt to define a common frontier in the Peninsula region.⁶⁴ Although these talks broke down without agreement, a vague idea of an "American Antarctica" began to emerge.⁶⁵ Promoted most fervently by the Chilean geographer Luis Risopatrón, the idea of an American Antarctica proposed that the geological continuity of the Andes Mountains into the Antarctic Peninsula region suggested that this area was part of South America, and therefore belonged to the nations of the Western Hemisphere. Over time, the idea of an "American Antarctica" would develop into the more specific idea of a "South American Antarctica" belonging to Argentina and Chile. The use of the Antarctic environment itself to make a case for Argentine and Chilean sovereignty laid the basis for the "environmental nationalism" that the two South American countries would use against British imperial claims to environmental authority in Antarctica between 1939 and 1959. In the short term, however, the idea of an American Antarctica reflected the inability of Argentina and Chile to reach any agreement concerning Antarctic sovereignty, and the breakdown of these talks highlighted the developing territorial rivalry between the two countries. Following

⁶³ Within international law "Effective Occupation" provides one of the strongest legal cases for sovereignty over a region. The precise definition of what constitutes effective occupation in Antarctica would be contested throughout the sovereignty dispute. The *East Greenland Case* (1933) appeared to reduce the requirements for effective occupation in polar regions. See, for example, Puig, *La Antártida argentina ante el derecho*.

⁶⁴ Eugenio A. Genest and Instituto Antártico Argentino, *Antártida sudamericana aportes para su comprensión* (Buenos Aires, 2001).

⁶⁵ Luis Risopatrón, *La Antártida americana* (Santiago, 1908).

the British claim to the Falkland Islands Dependencies in 1908, neither Argentina nor Chile would do much to advance their interests in Antarctica until the decade of the 1930s.

Despite the post-colonial history of expansion in both countries, by the early decades of the twentieth century, popular perceptions in Argentina and Chile tended to be shaped by the idea of territorial loss.⁶⁶ These feelings were closely connected with the emergence of new and more virulent strains of popular nationalist ideology in both countries.⁶⁷ In Argentina, this developing popular nationalism set itself against the traditional “patriotism” of the elites, and condemned the “sell-out” relationship between Argentina’s upper classes and the British Empire. Nationalist attacks on British possession of the *Islas Malvinas* and *Antártida Argentina* offered the ideal complement to their somewhat vague attacks on British economic imperialism in Argentina itself.⁶⁸ Early in 1939, concerned British diplomats translated a nationalist pamphlet published by the Alliance of Nationalist Youth during celebrations of the anniversary of the “re-conquest” of Buenos Aires from the British during the Napoleonic Wars.⁶⁹ The pamphlet linked these various grievances:

⁶⁶ Carlos Escudé, *Education, political culture, and foreign policy: the case of Argentina* ([Durham, N.C.], 1992).

⁶⁷ For a discussion of the emergence of right wing ideologies in Argentina see Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart, *The Argentine right: its history and intellectual origins, 1910 to the present*, Latin American silhouettes (Wilmington, Del., 1993). David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: the Nationalist movement, its history, and its impact* (Berkeley, 1993).

⁶⁸ Rosana Gúber, *Por qué Malvinas? De la causa nacional a la guerra absurda*, 1. ed. (México; Buenos Aires, 2001).

⁶⁹ British Embassy Buenos Aires to Foreign Office, 18 August 1939. TNA, CO 78/211/9. The British Embassy noted that anti-British feeling centered upon “the fact of our possession of territories in the Antarctic.” However, in one example of the poor relationship between the British Embassy and the British Colony, they did not see fit to inform the Governor of the Falkland Islands directly. Barlow Minutes, 9 September 1939. TNA, CO 78/211/9.

132 years ago the native people of this country made the

ENGLISH

invaders bite the dust of defeat in the streets of Buenos Aires. Today the vanquished of 1806 and 1807 dominate our *Islas Malvinas* (Falkland Islands) of which they deprived us by violence thus doing honour to their well established fame as

PIRATES

And now they are endeavouring to take possession of Antarctic Regions under Argentine sovereignty. At the same time they control the essential factors which govern our economic life, and while they wax rich as a result of our Railways, our Urban Transport Systems and our Frigoríficos, the native population of the country suffers hunger and misery. This is why we now proclaim the necessity for

ANOTHER RECONQUEST.

This emerging nationalism was explicitly anti-imperial, although it lost none of its expansionist, imperialist undertones and, it looked increasingly to European fascism for its inspiration.⁷⁰

In turn, this assertive Argentine nationalism worried nationalists in Chile, and helped to precipitate formal statements of Chilean ownership of the Antarctic Peninsula region. A feeling persisted among certain individuals that the whole of Patagonia belonged to them, and that Argentina's southward expansion had taken lands that were rightfully Chilean.⁷¹ By the 1930s, the predominance of British

⁷⁰ In fact, British diplomats suspected a German role in the production of such propaganda, see, for example, Ovey to Halifax, 21 October 1939. TNA, CO 78/211/9.

⁷¹ A leading proponent of this belief was Ramón Cañas Montalva, who would later become one of Chile's leading Antarctic figures. For a list of his writings see Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional, *Donación General Cañas Montalva: Catálogo del Fondo Bibliográfico* (Santiago, 1972).

economic interests in Chile had long since declined, and there was less general anti-British sentiment than in Argentina.⁷² Somewhat paradoxically, however, since the two South American nations shared many of the same legal arguments for Antarctic sovereignty it made sense, at times, for the Chileans to make common cause with the Argentines against the British, especially given the general post-Second World War *zeitgeist* of anti-imperialism. It was out of this loose, and suspicious alliance that the idea of a South American Antarctica would reemerge during the 1940s and 1950s.

Given the centrality of the clash between British imperialism and South American nationalism, the history of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute should be seen within the broader context of European decolonization that was taking place at this time.⁷³ Britain claimed the Falkland Islands Dependencies as a formal part of its Colonial Empire, painted pink on imperial maps. Argentines and Chileans, in contrast, argued that the Antarctic Peninsula was an “integral part” of their national territories. Therefore, according to South American nationalists, British pretensions to ownership of the Antarctic Peninsula region represented a claim to the colonial annexation of their territory. From this perspective, South American nationalism might be considered a form of anti-colonial nationalism, and both countries drew inspiration from the worldwide campaign against European imperialism. At the same time, however, despite the rhetoric of anti-imperialism in both Argentina and Chile, South American nationalists could never entirely escape the expansionist nature of their claims to Antarctica. Even as they campaigned against the British

⁷² By the time of the First World War, British economic interests in Chile had largely been overtaken by the United States and Germany. See, Miller, *Britain and Latin America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*.

⁷³ Most works on British decolonization make no mention of Antarctica, although some references are made in Hyam, *Britain's declining empire: the road to decolonisation, 1918-1968*.

Empire in Antarctica, the Argentines and Chileans were, in a sense, promoting their own “Frozen Empires” in the far south.

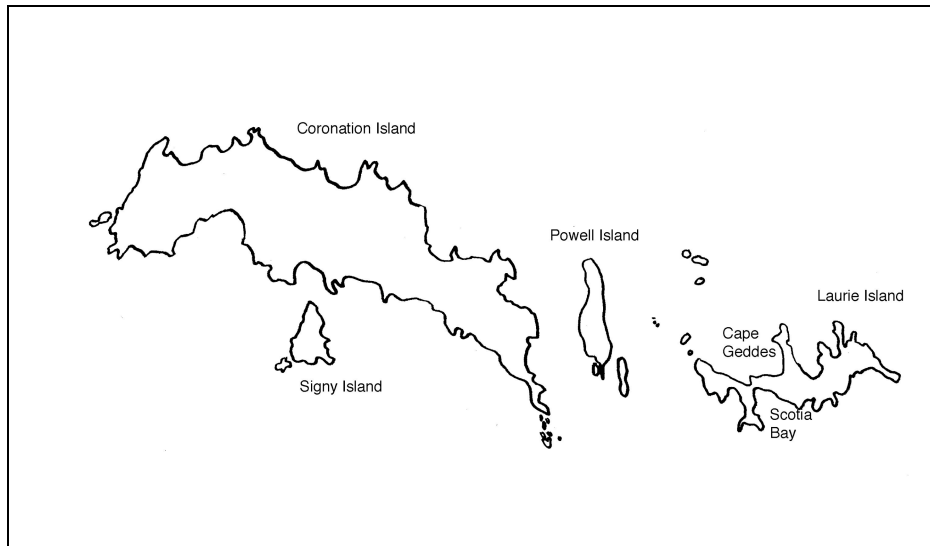


Figure 2: Sketch Map of South Orkney Islands.

THE ANTARCTIC ENVIRONMENT

Rather than merely being the stage upon which the contest between British Imperialism and South American nationalism took place, the Antarctic environment – and changing human perceptions of that environment – played dynamic roles in the course of the Antarctic Sovereignty dispute. Writing about the natural history of the Antarctic Peninsula, the marine biologist Sanford Moss notes:

Even though Antarctica is the fifth largest of the continents, it has the fewest forms of life inhabiting it. This fact provides unparalleled opportunities for naturalists. The plants and animals that visit, breed, and in some instances thrive here are of special interest to students of natural history. They offer one of the least complex webs of ecological interrelationships to be found on

earth. This is the place for the ecologist to formulate and test theory. At the same time the adaptations, which make life possible for Antarctic plants and animals are often very special indeed. They make wonderful study opportunities for the anatomist, the physiologist, and the evolutionist.⁷⁴

In a similar fashion, the relative simplicity of the Antarctic environment makes it easier to understand the interactions between human understanding, human activity, and the natural world. This in turn offers the potential for overcoming the problem of causation in environmental history, since it becomes possible to see how “historical change and causation proceed.”⁷⁵ This dissertation seeks to adopt a dynamic model of human-nature-culture interaction as outlined by Donald Worster and others.⁷⁶ Such an approach offers a way of finding common ground between excessive constructivism and excessive materialism in the writing of environmental history, going beyond the traditional dichotomy between humans and the natural world.⁷⁷

One of the most remarkable features of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute between Britain, Argentina, and Chile, was that the three countries would be fighting over a virtually unknown territory.⁷⁸ In 1928, the American Geographical Society published a collection of essays entitled *Problems of Polar Research*, which

⁷⁴ Sanford A. Moss and Lucia De Leiris, *Natural history of the Antarctic Peninsula* (New York, 1988).

⁷⁵ Richard White, "Environmental History, Ecology, and Meaning.," *Journal of American History* 76 (1990).

⁷⁶ See, for example, Worster, *The Ends of the earth: perspectives on modern environmental history*.

⁷⁷ Jan Golinski, *Making natural knowledge: constructivism and the history of science* (Chicago, 2005).

⁷⁸ Many books about Antarctica begin by describing it as a continent of superlatives: the coldest, the windiest, the driest, the iciest, and the highest, in the world. While all this is true, none of this was known for certain at the end of the 1930s when the active phase of the sovereignty dispute between Britain, Argentina, and Chile began.

described the existing state of knowledge about the Polar Regions.⁷⁹ As the title suggested, the heroic era had barely scratched the surface, and the problems of polar research remained numerous. Over the course of the 1930s, several advances were made in scientific understanding of the Antarctic continent through the expeditions of Rymill, Byrd, Ellsworth and others. However, even as the 1930s drew to a close, there remained huge gaps in human understanding of Antarctica as speculation continued to substitute for scientific knowledge. In 1938 the Australian Department of the Interior published a map of Antarctica, which contained the most up to date information available.⁸⁰ Many of the map's coastlines were drawn as dotted lines, indicating that the cartographer had no idea of their exact shape; most of the interior was simply left blank.

The most relatively well-known parts of the Antarctic environment were the physical features and marine life of the oceans surrounding the continent.⁸¹ The Southern Ocean begins at the Antarctic convergence at around 60° South. As early as the late eighteenth century, Captain Cook had realized that abrupt changes in temperature, salinity, and marine life take place where the cold waters at the south of the world meet the relatively warmer waters of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. To the south of the convergence Cook noted a greater abundance of whales, seals, and other large marine life. The oceanographic research of the *Challenger* expedition in the late nineteenth century helped to formalize this understanding, and Britain's Discovery Expeditions added more detail to this knowledge. Navigators

⁷⁹ American Geographical Society of New York, *Problems of polar research* (New York, 1928). Many of the leading polar explorers and scientists from the "Heroic Era" of Antarctic exploration contributed chapters.

⁸⁰ Map of Antarctica. TNA DO 35/890/6

⁸¹Fogg, *A history of Antarctic science*.

were also aware of a general ocean circulation from west to east. Into the 1930s, however, the relationship between the meteorology of Antarctica and the surrounding oceans remained largely unknown, as did the dynamics of sea ice formation, which varied greatly from year to year.

The greatest obstacle in the way of a thorough meteorological understanding of the Antarctica climate was the absence of permanent meteorological stations.⁸² Before the 1940s, the only permanent meteorological station anywhere near the Antarctic continent was the Argentine Laurie Island station in the South Orkneys, which had operated since 1904. But this was only one station in a vast region, and as a consequence its usefulness to synoptic meteorology or weather forecasting was severely limited. Various expeditions to Antarctica had taken meteorological observations, but these were relatively short term and were limited by the tendency for local conditions to over-ride large scale ones. Meteorologists recognized the hostility of the Antarctic climate, but nobody knew quite how hostile it would be. Many of the most basic meteorological questions could not be answered: for example, the Antarctic climate appeared almost too cold for snow.

The large blank spaces on the Australian map of 1938 reflected the problems inherent in mapping a region that is covered in ice. Not only did the ice cover most geographical features, but also the sea ice expanded and contracted with the seasons creating a “continent” that was around fifty percent larger during the winter than it was in the summer. During the 1930s, Antarctic glaciology was still an academic discipline in its infancy, and nobody knew the depth of the continental Antarctic ice. Estimates varied wildly, but there was a tendency to assume that that the ice would

⁸² Ibid.

be relatively thin. This “thin ice” hypothesis assumed that the Antarctic would be going through a similar period of glacial retreat that could be observed in the northern hemisphere.⁸³ The thickness of the ice would therefore have important implications for the world’s climatic history.

The presence of ice also provided a major obstacle to geologists. Until the 1930s, nobody knew whether the Antarctic Peninsula was even attached to the Antarctic continent at all. It was not until the British Rymill expedition of 1934-37, that the region was confirmed as a peninsula.⁸⁴ Even then, geologists remained uncertain whether a large channel separated East and West Antarctica, and whether Antarctica might in fact be two continents, or an archipelago of small islands. The nature of the land beneath the ice remained an almost complete mystery. Less than two per cent of the land surface of Antarctica was free from the ice, giving geologists a severely limited area in which to work. In geology in particular, the large gaps in the scientific understanding of tended to be filled with fantastic speculation about the potential mineral wealth and utility of the continent. Much of this speculation came from non-scientists, but scientists themselves were not above suggesting that a continent the size of Antarctica would likely contain some riches, especially if in so doing they could win support for their research. In the minds of many policy makers, Antarctica became a “Frozen *El Dorado*” brimming with mineral wealth.⁸⁵ This fantasy would have important political implications.

⁸³ Richard S. Lewis, *A continent for science; the Antarctic adventure* (New York., 1965).

⁸⁴ Robert Headland, *Chronological list of Antarctic expeditions and related historical events*, Studies in polar research (Cambridge [England] ; New York, 1989).

⁸⁵ Pinochet de la Barra, *La Antártica Chilena*.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF DECOLONIZATION

The Antarctic sovereignty dispute presents an opportunity to write an “environmental history of decolonization.” At the center of the clash between British Imperialism and Latin American Nationalism was the contest over environmental authority. Throughout the twenty-year dispute, the Argentines and Chileans challenged the assertions of scientific and administrative authority that the British used to legitimize their sovereignty claims. In thinking about what happened to British imperial claims to “dominion over nature” during the process of decolonization, this dissertation draws upon Louis and Robinson’s influential “Imperialism of Decolonization” article.⁸⁶ Rather than simply conceding to the Argentine and Chilean challenge, the British initially redoubled their efforts to assert their environmental authority in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. The South Americans responded by increasing their own efforts to appropriate the region. By the middle of the 1950s, after all possibilities for arbitration or compromise seemed to be exhausted, and in response to broader strategic changes within their empire, the British began to reconsider their position in the Antarctic Peninsula region. In alliance with the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, the British pushed for a “limited internationalization” of Antarctica that would retain their political influence without the need for formal political control. The idea of science, and the actual practice of scientific research, offered a useful tool for the retention of political influence. Argentina and Chile were somewhat “reluctant collaborators” in this process of internationalization. But the end result was, at least in some ways, much

⁸⁶ W. R. Louis and R. Robinson, "The Imperialism of Decolonization," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 22 (Sep, 1994).

to their liking: they found themselves members of an “exclusive club” that continued to govern Antarctica on the basis of science for the good of humanity.

The material reality of the Antarctic environment played an ever-present role in shaping the history of Antarctica: sea ice trapped ships, freezing temperatures killed explorers, and disintegrating ice shelves carried off scientific stations. Equally importantly, changing human perceptions of the environment over the course of the twenty-year period of the dispute had a major influence on the history. One of the causes of the dispute was the widespread belief that Antarctica might prove to be a “Frozen *El Dorado*,” brimming with mineral wealth. This belief was based on an almost total absence of scientific knowledge about the Antarctic continent. As the three countries fought over Antarctica, and sought to demonstrate their environmental authority through scientific research, they learned more about the region. As they learned more, their political perceptions of the environment changed, especially with the dawning realization that Antarctica was not the treasure trove that had recently been imagined. By acting as an important catalyst for the change in British policy, these changing perceptions helped to lay the foundations for the limited internationalization of Antarctica through the Antarctic Treaty of 1959.

In some ways the Antarctic environment remained a constant during the twenty-year period of the active sovereignty dispute. The vast Antarctic ice sheet, for example, which covered the interior of the continent, remained more or less unchanged throughout this period.⁸⁷ Battling to stay alive in such a hostile climate, explorers and scientists barely stopped to consider that their actions could have any impact whatsoever on the environment. At the same time, however, as people

⁸⁷ John Robert McNeill, *Something new under the sun: an environmental history of the twentieth-century world*, 1st ed. (New York, 2000).

learned more about the natural environment of Antarctica, that environment was itself changing, both “naturally” and as a result of human influence. The object of study was never absolutely fixed. The most dramatic environmental change that took place between 1939 and 1959 was the rapid and almost terminal decline of the Southern Ocean’s whale populations, and the associated changes in the marine ecosystem. Since over-fishing caused this decline, it was clearly an anthropogenic change. It was also probably the only large-scale environmental change that took place during this period that had a direct influence on the course of the sovereignty dispute. As whale populations declined, the whaling industry lost its luster, further contributing to changing economic and political perceptions of the region.

Chapters One and Two examine the origins of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute. The immediate cause of the dispute was the escalating Argentine and Chilean nationalist attack upon British possession of the Falkland Islands Dependencies, which in Argentina came alongside a challenge to British “informal imperialism” in the country itself. By the late 1930s, this nationalism was beginning to exercise a strong influence on government policy. The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 offered the two South American countries an opportunity to assert their Antarctic claims without fears of an immediate British response. The Argentines and Chileans framed their claims, at least in part, in the language of environmental nationalism: rather than conceding environmental authority to the British, the South Americans attempted to argue that the Antarctic environment itself made a case for their sovereignty rights, especially given the geological continuity of the Andes mountains. Great Britain, however, did not give up on its claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies, and almost as soon as the wartime situation allowed, the British Government dispatched the top secret Operation Tabarin in an effort to

occupy the region permanently and renew Britain's scientific labors. An underlying cause of the sovereignty dispute was the fact that all three countries believed that the Antarctic Peninsula region was a region worth claiming and holding onto. This belief was closely connected to the idea of Antarctica as a "Frozen *El Dorado*" which came out of the absence of any real scientific knowledge about Antarctica. Whaling was the only known source of wealth.

Chapter Three looks at the post-war "Scramble for Antarctica" that took place in the southern summer of 1946-47. The election of new governments in Argentina and Chile revived South American interest in Antarctic sovereignty and encouraged an active response to Britain's Operation Tabarin. During this season Britain, Argentina, Chile, and the United States established new bases in and around the Peninsula region. Alongside their principal purpose of establishing "effective occupation," these new bases all sought to conduct scientific research in order to support competing claims to "environmental authority." The Chileans, in particular, supplemented this scientific research with a more literary form of environmental nationalism, as Chilean authors transferred the myths and legends of Southern Chile to the shores of the Antarctic Peninsula, thereby creating something of a folkloric case for sovereignty. The Scramble for Antarctica ended in controversy amidst mutual accusations of robbery at the abandoned US East Base at Marguerite Bay.

Chapter Four looks at the anti-imperial rhetoric employed by Argentina and Chile in their case for Antarctic sovereignty. This anti-imperialism was most intense between 1946 and 1948 as the governments of Perón in Argentina and González Videla in Chile sought to harness the global mood of anti-imperialism in order to win domestic support and international recognition for their cause. In Argentina, the intensification of anti-imperial assertions of sovereignty in Antarctica and the

Malvinas coincided with an escalating attack on British economic interests in Argentina itself. On the other side of the dispute, the overlap of formal and informal empire continued to influence the dispute as British officials found themselves caught between the desire to take a strong line in the defense of Antarctic sovereignty and the attempt to preserve political and economic interests in South America. This period marked a distinct deterioration in relations between Britain and the two South American countries.

Chapter Five examines the various attempts that were made to diffuse the escalating sovereignty dispute, and bring about a brief period of Antarctic *détente*. The United States in particular feared that war might break about over the question of Antarctic sovereignty to the detriment of its developing “Free World” alliance against the Soviet Union. The plans proposed included United Nations trusteeship, an eight power condominium (involving the seven claimant powers and the United States), and a “standstill” agreement suggested by Chile. Although none of these proposals met with any success, Britain, Argentina, and Chile agreed to pull back from the brink, and signed a tri-partite naval agreement before the 1948-49 season. The relaxation of hostilities encouraged a greater focus on scientific endeavors and promoted a developing understanding of the Antarctic environment, particularly in the field of meteorology.

Chapters Six and Seven focus on the renewed efforts of Argentina to win the sovereignty dispute between 1950 and 1955. Perón brought to an end the brief period of Antarctic *détente* by threatening to “saturate” Antarctica with Argentine scientific bases. This represented an attempt to beat the British at their own imperial game by asserting Argentine “environmental authority” and conducting more scientific research of a greater quality than their territorial rivals. During this period,

armed force was used in Antarctica for the first (and only) time in confrontations at Hope Bay and Deception Island. For a while, it looked like Perón's "Antarctic Dream" might be successful, and the purchase of an icebreaker ship and the construction of Base Belgrano on the coast of the Weddell Sea attested to Argentina's ambitions. Chile responded by withdrawing, to some extent, from direct participation in the struggle for scientific supremacy. Its own claims to "environmental authority" increasingly fell back upon representations of the Antarctic environment that would not have been widely considered "scientific".⁸⁸ Britain responded to Perón's assertiveness with a unilateral submission of the case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, hoping to draw a line under the increasing Argentine penetration of the region. Britain's submission included an explicit reference to environmental authority as part of its legal case for sovereignty. Quite predictably, neither South American country accepted the jurisdiction of the ICJ in a case that they regarded as a domestic concern, and the case was withdrawn. In the end, it would be the overthrow of Perón by a military coup in September 1955 that brought to an end to this particularly tense period of the sovereignty dispute.

Chapter Eight explores the growth of international interest in Antarctica that took place around the middle of the 1950s. One of the most important developments was the initiation of a large international research project known as the International Geophysical Year (IGY) that would take place between 1957-58 and would have a particular focus on Antarctica. Also important was an Indian proposal to raise the "Antarctic Question" at the United Nations. This suggestion threatened to bring

⁸⁸ Somewhat confusingly, one of the principal Chilean methods of thinking about Antarctica became the "New Science" of Geopolitics, which was not really scientific at all according to established the standards of the time.

about a genuine internationalization of the Antarctic continent, and was fiercely resisted by Britain, Argentina, and Chile. This joint resistance ultimately proved successful and demonstrated that the three countries could work together for their common interests despite the bitter dispute in the Antarctica Peninsula. Throughout the 1950s, the intensification of whaling activities in the oceans around Antarctica led to a rapid decline in whale populations. International attempts to regulate whaling and safeguard the whale populations took place alongside the sovereignty dispute. But these attempts proved largely ineffectual, and by the end of the decade the whaling industry was entering a period of terminal decline.

Chapter Nine focuses on the work of the IGY of 1957-58. This massive international research endeavor had a major impact on the history of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute. Contrary to the traditional interpretation of the relationship of the IGY to the political history of Antarctica, which stresses its scientific idealism, this chapter suggests that the most important political consequence came from the science itself. During the IGY, tremendous advances were made in the scientific understanding of the Antarctic environment. These developments revealed that Antarctica was not the “Frozen *El Dorado*” of popular imagination. In the face of these scientific developments, the British in particular began to rethink their attachment to exclusive political sovereignty in Antarctica, and began to push for a limited internationalization of the continent. The South Americans were somewhat “reluctant collaborators” during the IGY, and they initially opposed any moves to internationalize the continent.

Chapter Ten investigates the immediate background to the signature of the Antarctic Treaty in December 1959. Having decided that some form of limited internationalization would be the best political option for Antarctica, the British

initiated a series of secret negotiations with the United States, Australia and New Zealand in an attempt to lay the foundations for such an outcome. In May 1958 the United States issued invitations to the other eleven nations participating in the IGY to attend a series of preparatory meetings in Washington D.C. in order to discuss the political future of Antarctica. This decision to invite only those nations participating in Antarctic scientific research created an explicit connection between Antarctic science and Antarctic politics. Following almost eighteen months of negotiations, representatives of these twelve countries met between October and December 1959 for the official Antarctic conference. After overcoming a series of problems, the twelve countries signed the Antarctic Treaty on 1 December 1959. The Treaty suspended all sovereignty claims to Antarctica for its duration and effectively brought an end to the active phase of the sovereignty dispute between Britain, Argentina, and Chile. The limited internationalization of the continent represented a success for British diplomacy: they had transferred their interests from claims to formal control to informal influence, without even having to give up on their political claims. In Argentina and Chile the internationalization of Antarctica proved less popular, but in the long term the Treaty offered the two South American countries full participation in an “exclusive club” that governed the Southern Continent. The Antarctic Treaty System that developed after 1959 would continue to draw its legitimacy from claims to environmental authority and might also be seen as a form of “Frozen Empire.”

Chapter 1: South American Antarctica, 1939-1943

On the eve of the Second World War, the governments of Argentina and Chile began to show a renewed interest in the question of Antarctic sovereignty. The immediate catalyst for this change was a Norwegian invitation to attend a polar conference in the city of Bergen, where the question of Antarctic sovereignty would be discussed.¹ This invitation stimulated the Argentine and Chilean Governments to think anew about their legal rights to Antarctica, and both countries established Antarctic Commissions to study the legal basis of putting forward their claims. In Argentina, the embattled, elite-dominated *Concordancia* government of Roberto Ortiz found itself increasingly under attack from intellectual and popular nationalists. These nationalists accused the Argentine ruling classes of “selling out” their country to foreign interests, especially the British. The promotion of Argentine interests in Antarctica offered President Ortiz a way to appease nationalist sentiment, while remaining in line with the traditional “territorial nationalism” of the Argentine elite.² In Chile, growing Argentine interest in Antarctica was viewed with suspicion.³ Certain Chilean officials, especially those attached to the growing philosophy of “geopolitics,” thought that Argentine sovereignty in Antarctica would pose a direct challenge to their country’s security and they pressed their government to take pre-emptive action.

¹ Given their substantial interest in the Antarctic whaling industry, the Norwegian Government was keen on clarifying the legal situation of Antarctica. Norway was also on the verge of making its own claim to a different part of Antarctica (Queen Maud Land, to the East of the Weddell Sea) in an effort to pre-empt a claim by Nazi Germany. Martin, *A history of Antarctica*. 189-190.

² For several years, the Argentine Government had been making periodic references to its possession of the South Orkney Islands. See Puig, *La Antártida argentina ante el derecho*.

³ For a list of early Chilean writings on Antarctica see, Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional, *Donación General Cañas Montalva: Catálogo del Fondo Bibliográfico*. 138, 216-217.

Alongside the latent belief in both Argentina and Chile that Antarctica belonged to their respective countries, growing speculation about the economic potential of Antarctica heightened South American interest in the southern continent. The greatest promoter of Antarctica as a frozen *El Dorado* was the renowned US polar explorer Admiral Richard E. Byrd. In late 1939, Byrd set off for an expedition to Antarctica that would be his third, but the first to have the official sponsorship of the US Government. President Roosevelt handed the Admiral instructions to prepare a case for a US claim to sovereignty. The expedition took with it observers from Argentina and Chile. In early 1941, after two sections of the expedition had spent a winter in Antarctica, the expedition was canceled due to international pressures of war. Nevertheless, Admiral Byrd reported to a Congressional hearing that his expedition had discovered no fewer than 147 different minerals in Antarctica, including gold, iron, copper, magnesium, zinc and petroleum.⁴ These reports would be widely repeated in South America, as the governments of Argentina and Chile looked for ways to justify their growing interest in Antarctica.

The outbreak of the Second World War offered the two South American countries an opportunity to pursue their reawakened territorial ambitions in Antarctica with relative impunity. While Argentina and Chile remained obstinately neutral, Great Britain – the only country with formal sovereignty claims to the Antarctic Peninsula region – became embroiled in a desperate struggle for survival. In the early years of the war, there would be very little that the British could do to protect their interests in Antarctica.⁵ In November 1940, after misreading US

⁴ See Pinochet de la Barra, *La Antártica Chilena*. 164. Hearings before the Subcommittee on Appropriations. 76th Congress, 1st and 3rd Sessions.

⁵ In fact, for several years it even looked likely that the British would lose the war, in which case the Argentines and Chileans hoped to take over Britain's Antarctic possessions.

intentions, the Chilean Government took the initiative and made a formal claim to the sector between 53°W and 90°W, which over-lapped substantially with Britain's Falkland Islands Dependencies. The Chileans were at pains to make clear that this was not a new claim, but rather a clarification of the extent of an existing claim that went all the way back to the Treaty of Tordesillas between Spain and Portugal of 1494. Shortly after the Chilean claim, the leaders of the respective Antarctic Commissions, the Argentine Ruíz Moreno and the Chilean Julio Escudero, met to discuss the question of sovereignty in Antarctica. The Escudero-Ruíz Moreno negotiations failed to reach an agreement on the respective boundaries between the two countries in Antarctica, but they did reach agreement over the fact that the Peninsula region belonged to South America, and not to some distant colonialist country.⁶

The idea of a South American Antarctica that emerged out of the Escudero-Ruíz Moreno negotiations offers a fascinating example of a South American identity that transcended the nation state, at least for Chileans and Argentines.⁷ It also provides an early case study of South American “environmental nationalism.” Implicit in the idea of a South American Antarctica was the sense that the Antarctic Peninsula region belonged to Argentina and Chile, not just legally and historically, but also environmentally and geographically. Geological continuity, shared weather systems, and paleontological evidence of similar flora and fauna provided “proof”

⁶ The anti-British sentiment expressed by South American claims to Antarctica was at direct variance with the economic support that the two South American countries, especially Argentina, continued to give to Great Britain. Throughout the war, the continual supply of Argentine beef was an important component in keeping Britain from starving.

⁷ The idea of a South American Antarctica was largely the creation of Argentines and Chileans. Other South American states generally supported these two countries in their campaign against Britain's Falkland Islands Dependencies, but had little, if any, attachment to the idea of a South American Antarctica. Genest and Instituto Antártico Argentino, *Antartida sudamericana aportes para su comprensión*.

that the Antarctic Peninsula region was part of South America. Such environmental nationalism presented a challenge to British claims of scientific authority in the region. However, almost from its inception, the idea of South American Antarctica began to break down. The idea was founded on mutual suspicion rather than a genuine alliance. The Argentine expeditions that sailed to Antarctica in the middle years of the Second World War did so specifically to promote Argentine sovereignty, not the vague idea of a South American Antarctica.

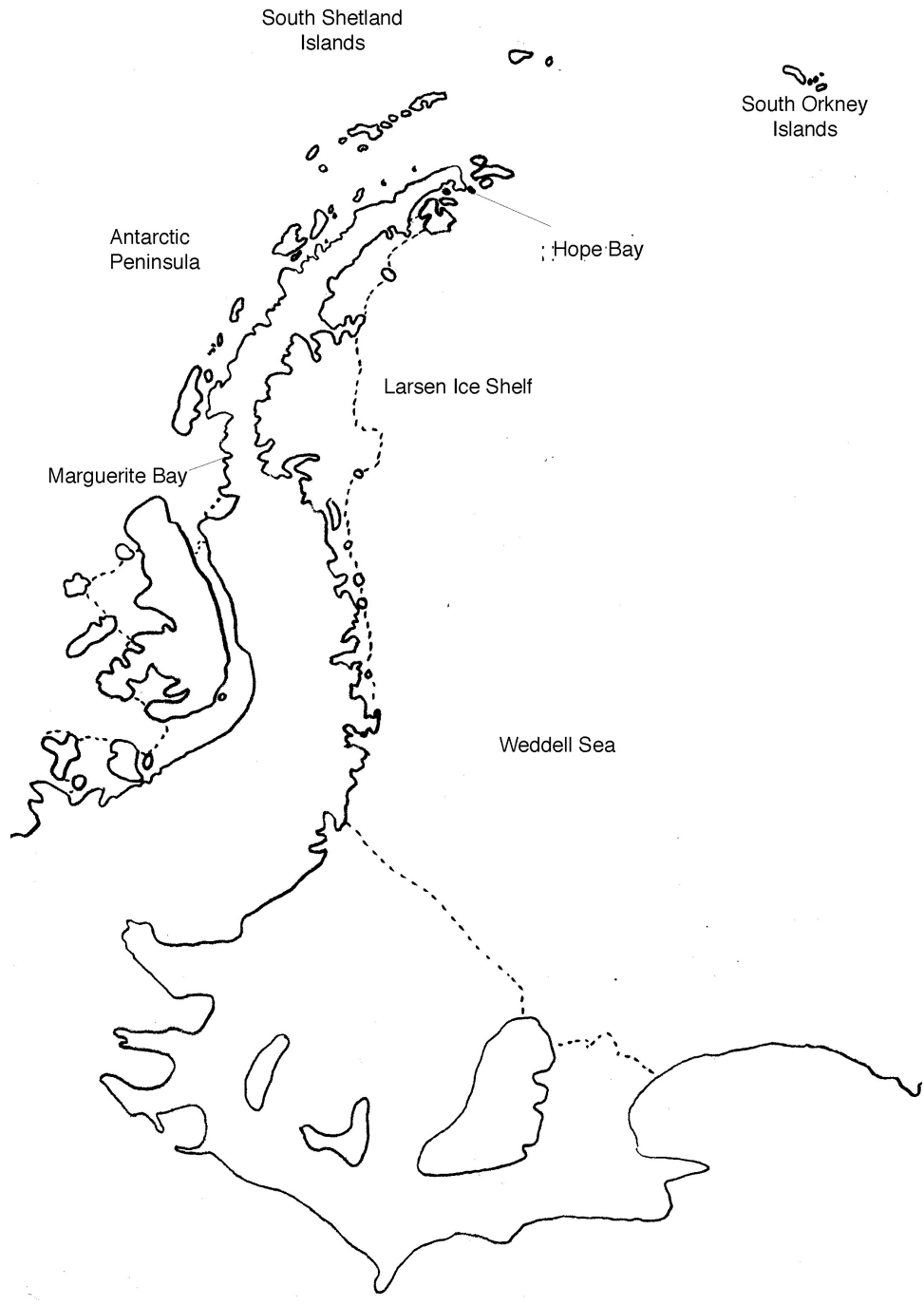


Figure 3: Sketch Map of Antarctic Peninsula Region.

THE CONFERENCE OF BERGEN

In the middle of 1938, a Norwegian invitation to attend a polar conference in the city of Bergen began to reawaken Argentine and Chilean interest in the Antarctica. In the context of Antarctica in 1938, Norway was one of the few non-claimant countries to have any interest in the question of Antarctic sovereignty because of the massive Norwegian interest in the Antarctic whaling industry.⁸ In an attempt to resolve the question of sovereignty, the Norwegian government proposed to hold an international conference that would include all countries with an interest in Antarctica. Great Britain, Argentina and Chile were among the countries invited to attend. The invitation stimulated the two South American republics to start to think about their own rights to sovereignty in the Antarctic Continent, and how best they could assert these rights.

Before the Bergen conference could be held, the Norwegian government accelerated its plans to make a sovereignty claim. On 14 January 1939, facing the threat that Nazi Germany might annex large parts of Antarctica, the Norwegian Government issued a decree claiming for Norway the coasts of Dronning Maud Land, to the east of the Weddell Sea. Upon hearing of the Norwegian claim, the Government of Chile expressly reserved “all and any right that the government of Chile might have upon the Antarctic territories in question.”⁹ The Chilean Foreign Ministry explained to its Consul that it was proceeding in this manner not because the territory was claimed by Chile, but because it was not certain that Chilean rights did not exist. The Chilean reaction to the Norwegian claim demonstrates a renewed

⁸ Tønnessen and Johnsen, *The history of modern whaling*.

⁹ A. Ortega, Chilean Foreign Ministry, to the Chilean Representative in Norway, Santiago, 20 March 1939. Ministerio RR.EE., “Antártico, 1939-1952.”

interest in the Antarctic regions, tinged with an element of uncertainty. Argentina shared with Chile this feeling of latent sovereignty rights, and in 1939 both countries set out to investigate exactly what their rights to the region were.

In June 1939, the Argentine government of President Ortiz established a provisional Antarctic Commission in order to prepare Argentina's position for the Conference of Bergen.¹⁰ The provisional commission was headed by Dr. Isidoro Ruíz Moreno, a distinguished international lawyer with close connections to the Foreign Minister. It also included Captain Francisco J. Clarizza, representative of the Navy, and Alfredo G. Galmarini, representative of the Ministry of Agriculture. The text of the decree that created the provisional commission suggests that the Argentine government was already thinking in terms of how to make a case for Argentine sovereignty in the Antarctic continent:

That the geographic position of its territory, situated in the most southern part of South America, assigns to Argentina, for both scientific and political reasons, a natural right to participate in the questions surrounding the problems of the Antarctic Continent. The geological similarity with our own territory, just as its probable link to the continent is also a fact that is worth elucidating.¹¹

At this moment, the Argentine government was using effective occupation, geographical proximity, geological continuity and scientific investigation to support

¹⁰ Argentine Republic. Comisión Nacional del Antártico, *Soberanía argentina en la Antártida. Nota preliminar del Presidente de la Nación, Juan Perón*, 2. ed. (Buenos Aires, 1948).

¹¹ Genest and Instituto Antártico Argentino, *Antartida sudamericana aportes para su comprensión*. 81.

Argentina's rights to a place at the negotiating table.¹² But soon these very same arguments would be used to make a case for Argentine sovereignty in Antarctica.

The formation of the provisional Antarctic Commission in Argentina under the leadership of Ruíz Moreno was a "top down" initiative. But it also had its roots in the escalating nationalist challenge to the Argentine elite and their collaborative relationship with Great Britain. A strong policy in Antarctica offered President Ortiz's ailing government an opportunity to demonstrate its nationalist credentials in the face of stringent nationalist attacks. Faced with the prospect of the international discussion of Antarctic sovereignty rights at the conference of Bergen, the liberal nationalists of the Ortiz government wanted to know what the Argentine rights were. The announcement that Argentina would participate in the Bergen Conference to assert its sovereignty in Antarctica was made on 24 July 1939.¹³

One month after the formation of the provisional Argentine Antarctic Commission, Señor Cantilo, the Argentine Minister of Foreign Relations handed a note to the Chilean Ambassador in Buenos Aires inviting Chile to collaborate with Argentina at the conference of Bergen.¹⁴ In September, Chilean President Pedro Aguirre Cerda issued a decree that created a Chilean Antarctic Commission. This Commission, under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had a similar remit to its Argentine equivalent: to study Chilean titles to Antarctica. The Commission was made up of Julio Escudero, a distinguished international lawyer, and Comandante Enrique Cordovez Madariaga, a retired Naval Captain who had headed

¹² At the British Colonial Office, Barlow noted that such geographical reasoning, "smacked somewhat of Nazi Philosophy." Barlow, Minutes, 9 September 1939. TNA, CO 78/211/9.

¹³ Dodds, British Embassy, BA, to Foreign Office, 31 July 1939. TNA, FO371/22714.

¹⁴ Oscar Pinochet de la Barra, *Medio siglo de recuerdos antárticos: memorias*, 1. ed. (Santiago de Chile, 1994). 36.

the Navy's Institute of Navigation and Hydrography. The timing of the decree, coming so soon after the creation of the Argentine Commission and Cantilo's suggestion of co-operation, suggests that to some extent Chile was responding to Argentine initiatives. But at the same time, as the earlier Chilean reply to the Norwegian claim had shown, the Chileans believed that they too might also have some rights to sovereignty in Antarctica.

Unlike in Argentina, where the Antarctic question was connected to the issue of the *Malvinas*, Chilean interest in Antarctica at this stage lacked any real popular dimension.¹⁵ Instead, a small group of officials, centered upon the nascent Antarctic Commission, provided the driving force behind Chilean interest in the Southern Continent. These officials shared something of the "liberal nationalism" of the Argentine elites, but with important differences. Even more so than in Argentina, the notion of territorial loss marked the consciousness of the Chilean "official mind". In 1881 Chile and Argentina had signed a treaty that left most of Patagonia under Argentine control. With hindsight, certain Chileans had come to be very critical of this treaty, believing that the whole of Patagonia should have been Chilean territory. They wanted to be sure that such an error caused by careless oversight of Chilean rights would never happen again.¹⁶ Chilean officials therefore studied the Antarctic question with a view to showing that much of the Peninsula region belonged to Chile. The more evidence they accumulated to support the Chilean case, the greater the fear became that Chile would once again lose its rightful territory. Such fear

¹⁵ Enrique Cordovez Madariaga, *La Antártida sudamericana* (Santiago, Chile, 1945).

¹⁶ Enrique Cordovez Madariaga, Newspaper Article written for distribution to provincial press: "La Antártica y Sus Posibilidades", without date. RR.EE., "Antártida Chilena, Varios, 1940-48".

became a constant theme in the vocabulary of Escudero, Cordovez and others with an interest in the “Antarctic Problem.”

On 9 September 1939, Great Britain declared war on Nazi Germany and began an all-embracing struggle that would last for nearly six years. The governments of Chile and Argentina, along with all other American republics, adopted a position of official neutrality.¹⁷ As an immediate consequence of the war, plans for the conference of Bergen had to be abandoned and the immediate prospects of resolving the question of Antarctic sovereignty through an international conference disappeared. However, the interest in Antarctica that the invitation to the conference of Bergen had reawakened in South America did not go away. With Britain obviously distracted by events in Europe, opportunities for the two South American countries to assert their claims to Antarctica increased. With reference to Argentina, J.V. Perowne, head of the South American Department at the British Foreign Office noted:

In normal times the Argentine Government probably do not regard the satisfaction of their claims to the Falkland Islands and their dependencies as a matter of practical politics, but as they have no other irredenta it is no doubt useful for them to keep the pot boiling. Now that we are at war hopes of acquiring our possessions in the South Atlantic are probably a good deal higher.¹⁸

Any direct action by Argentina to assert sovereignty in the inhabited Falkland Islands themselves would have constituted a hostile act of aggression. In contrast, the unpopulated Antarctic Peninsula appeared to offer the governments of both Argentina and Chile a region where they could flex their nationalist muscles without

¹⁷ R. A. Humphreys, *Latin America and the Second World War*, 2 vols. (London, 1981).

¹⁸ J.V. Perowne, Minute, 25 October 1939. TNA, FO 371/22714.

directly confronting British nationals. More importantly, in the uncertainty of 1939 it appeared very possible that Britain might lose the war. Should this happen, Argentina and Chile would be in line to assume sovereignty in the region.

One of the severest threats to the British war effort was the possibility that Germany would cut off supplies to the British Isles. In the battle to keep Britain fed, the South Atlantic would become one of the most important battlefields.¹⁹ The strategic importance of the British possessions in the South Atlantic was therefore profoundly connected to the commerce between Great Britain and South America, especially with Argentina. Over the course of the war, Britain would receive 40% of its beef from Argentina in exchange for blocked sterling balances that would accumulate in London.²⁰ German boats and submarines operating in the South Atlantic threatened this important source of food. The islands and bays of the Falkland Islands and the Antarctic Peninsula potentially offered strategic bases for the German boats. By controlling these regions the British believed that they could minimize the German threat. In British eyes, the Argentine claims to the Falkland Islands and the Falkland Islands Dependencies therefore had the potential to threaten the export of foodstuffs from Argentina.²¹ Such a paradoxical situation, with Argentina seen as both a friend and an enemy, laid the peculiar foundations for the Antarctic sovereignty dispute as it would develop over the course of the Second World War.

¹⁹ The strategic importance of the South Atlantic had been revealed by the Battle of the Falkland Islands in the First World War, and would be very soon shown again in the Battle of the River Plate in December 1939. Mary Cawkell, *The Falkland Islands* (London, 1960). 151-159.

²⁰ Mario Rapoport, "Imágenes de la Política Exterior Argentina. Tres Enfoques Tradicionales," in *La Política Exterior Argentina y Sus Protagonistas, 1880-1995*, ed. Silvia Ruth Jalabe (Buenos Aires, 1996), 45.

²¹ This threat was perceived to be even greater due to the connections that existed between certain Argentine Nationalists and Nazi Germany.

FROZEN *EL DORADO*

With South American interest in Antarctica growing ever greater throughout 1939, the attitude of the United States towards the region complicated the situation still further. In late 1939 a two-part US expedition under the command of Admiral Richard E. Byrd set sail for Antarctica.²² In the 1930s, Admiral Byrd had become the world's most famous living Antarctic explorer. With his traditional Naval career cut short by recurrent injuries, Byrd turned to naval aviation as a way to advancement. After flying across the Atlantic he progressed to Antarctica as a stage for his adventure. In his first expedition to Antarctica in 1929-1930 Byrd became the first man to fly over the South Pole. In his second expedition, he set out to become the first man to spend an Antarctic winter on his own at an inland station. Byrd was a true Antarctic visionary. In his best-selling account of his second expedition, *Alone*, he had set out a plan for colonies in Antarctica that would rectify the problems of the world.²³ Antarctica, he believed, offered human civilization a possibility for a new beginning, cleansed of the sordid realities of the twentieth century. But he was also a formidable "Antarctic Booster," acutely aware of the financial needs of Antarctic exploration. In both of his first two expeditions, Byrd had perfected the art of attracting private sponsorship through speculating about the economic potential of the southern continent.

Byrd's expedition of 1939 was the first to be officially sponsored by the US government. Until then, the basic US position with regards to sovereignty in the

²² Headland, *Chronological list of Antarctic expeditions and related historical events*.

²³ Richard Evelyn Byrd, *Alone* (New York, 1938).

Southern Continent had been set by the Hughes Doctrine of non-recognition of 1924: the United States refused to recognize any sovereignty claims in Antarctica while reserving its own right to make a claim to any part of the continent.²⁴ On this expedition, however, Byrd took with him instructions from President Roosevelt to perform acts of possession in various parts of the Antarctic Continent, which could form the basis of a potential US claim. Byrd also set out to assess the economic potential of Antarctica for the United States. He knew that political interest in Antarctica was dependent upon its economic potential, and that funding for future expeditions depended, at least in part, on the possibility of finding mineral resources. As a consequence, Byrd was very keen to suggest that Antarctica was a frozen *El Dorado*, brimming with mineral wealth.

The Byrd expedition established two bases: Little America III on the Ross Sea, and East Base in the contested Antarctic Peninsula region. During the long Antarctic winter of 1940, both sections of Byrd's expedition conducted a program of scientific research. Among the principal scientific objectives of Byrd's expedition was an economic survey of the Antarctic continent. Upon his return, Byrd testified before the Congressional Sub-Committee on Appropriations committee that his expedition had discovered 147 different types of minerals in Antarctica including iron, coal, and petroleum.²⁵ These findings really said nothing about the economic

²⁴ H.R. Hall, "The 'Open Door' into Antarctica: An Explanation of the Hughes Doctrine," *Polar Record* 25 (1989). The Hughes doctrine reserved the right of the United States to make a claim to Antarctic territory while refusing to recognize the claims made by other countries: "It is the opinion of this department that the discovery of lands unknown to civilization, even when coupled with the formal taking of possession, does not support a valid claim of sovereignty unless the discovery is followed by actual settlement of the discovered country." Quoted in Martin, *A history of Antarctica*.167. More recently, British titles to the Falkland Islands Dependencies had been challenged by Professor Hobbs of the University of Michigan, in the *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*. See, Bertram to Wiseman, 26 April 1940. TNA, FO371/24168.

²⁵ Pinochet de la Barra, *La Antártica Chilena*. 164. Hearings before the Subcommittee on Appropriations 76th Congress, 1st and 3rd Sessions.

potential of Antarctica, since the discoveries were often minuscule. But Byrd's enthusiastic belief in a frozen *El Dorado* would prove to be contagious. South American authors repeatedly quoted his findings. The results helped to convince both the Argentine and Chilean Antarctic Commissions that sovereignty claims would be worth making.

Renewed US interest in Antarctic sovereignty – coming as it did at the same time as renewed South American interest – posed a problem for pan-American relations. Roosevelt's "good neighbor" policy aimed to create a harmonious pan-American alliance between all the countries of the American continent. The interest of Chile and Argentina in the Antarctic Peninsula meant that any US claim to the region would not only undermine Britain's claims to sovereignty, but also present a snub to the two South American countries. In an effort to reassure the two South American countries, the US sent them both a letter expressing a vague notion of American solidarity and inviting them each to send two officials on the expedition.²⁶ In stark contrast, the US government did not even inform the British that an expedition was leaving for territory Britain claimed as its own.²⁷ At this stage, United States' sympathies were clearly on the side of an "American Antarctica", even if their own interests came above those of Chile and Argentina.

While the two sections of Admiral Byrd's expedition were still in the process of establishing American bases in Antarctica the US government sent another letter

²⁶ Genest and Instituto Antártico Argentino, *Antartida sudamericana aportes para su comprension*. 84.

²⁷ Bertram to Wiseman, 26 April 1940. TNA, FO 371/24168. Although no official notification had been given to the British, letters between scientists revealed not only that the United States was intending to set up a base in the Falkland Islands Dependencies, but also that the intention was to keep this base occupied for a number of years. As a leading British polar scientist, Bertram pleaded with the Government that the question of British sovereignty in Antarctica "should not be allowed to lapse entirely."

to the governments of Chile and Argentina.²⁸ Reflecting Byrd's belief in Antarctica as a frozen *El Dorado*, the letter explained that the American expeditions were researching and studying the lands and seas of Antarctica with a particular focus on the continent's natural resources. If such resources were to be found, the letter assured, they would be shared with the other American Republics. The letter went on to discuss the delicate issue of potential sovereignty rights in the region. The Argentines translated the important passage as follows:

In order to avoid possible complications with respect to the disputed rights in the Antarctic regions investigated and studied by the United States, and in order to promote the development of those regions, it might prove to be convenient to make sovereignty claims upon them. It is believed that such titles could be claimed with greater efficiency by an individual Government, and if such titles were consequently declared by the government of the United States as a result of the investigations and studies described above, it is desired that the other republics of the Americas know that those titles could be considered as a protection of the opportunity for all Governments and citizens of all the American Republics to participate in the development and utilization of the resources that the claimed regions might possess.²⁹

Officials in the Chilean Foreign Ministry translated the final lines of this letter somewhat differently. Instead of reading the letter as a justification for a potential US claim, the Chileans saw it as a request by the North Americans for the Chilean government to make a claim to Antarctica: "It is desired that the said claims, in order to be more efficient, are made by one government individually, and that, upon being confirmed by the government of the United States... the other republics of the

²⁸ Genest and Instituto Antártico Argentino, *Antartida sudamericana aportes para su comprension*. 85-86.

²⁹ Ibid. 85-86. Original Argentine translation.

Americas would know...”³⁰ The cause of Chile’s differing interpretation was a mistake in translating the North American letter from English into Spanish, as the Chilean Ambassador in Washington would point out several years later.³¹ The United States had not asked the Chilean Government to make a claim to Antarctica, but what mattered was that the Chileans thought they had.³²

The different interpretation of one line of the American letter led to very different reactions by Argentina and Chile. Thinking that the United States was about to make claims that would extend to the peninsula region, the Argentine government responded diplomatically but firmly with a letter to the State Department that stated that their own claims to Antarctica had always been guided by the same pan-American concerns that the North Americans were now expressing:

...as your Excellency knows, our country claims as its own property and sovereignty some parts of the Antarctic, based on geographic and historical reasons and in the acts of occupation that have been realized for a number of years. In these regions it has been sensitive to an encounter of interests with the United States.³³

³⁰ Pinochet de la Barra, *Medio siglo de recuerdos antárticos: memorias*. 72.

³¹ Nieto del Rio to Chilean Foreign Minister, Washington, 16 July 1948. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Conversaciones Escudero-Green”. The Chilean Ambassador in Washington noted: “I have the impression that a translation that I consider defective of the said document induced the Ministry to believe that the United States, in a certain way, insinuated that our Government should make an assertion of sovereignty in the Antarctic Zone.”

³² Ministerio de RR.EE., Circular Confidencial No.1, 10 February 1941. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48”. The Chilean memorandum notes that: “in attention to the fact that these communications were sent to our country, but not to Argentina, our government commissioned Julio Escudero, professor of international law, to carry out studies related to the rights of Chile on a part of Antarctica.” In reality, Escudero had already been commissioned before the United States letter had been received.

³³ Genest and Instituto Antártico Argentino, *Antartida sudamericana aportes para su comprension*. 86-87.

The wording of the Argentine letter made it clear to the US government that a conflict of interests would occur should the North Americans make a claim to the portion of Antarctica that Argentina thought of as its own. The precise area of this “Argentine Antarctic” remained unclear. Considering the United States’ preoccupation with pan-Americanism, this letter may have had some effect on the North American Government’s decision not to make a claim on the Antarctic continent.

In May 1940, the Argentine Antarctic Commission, which had been established on a permanent basis a month earlier, wrote a long letter to José María Cantilo, the Argentine Minister of Foreign Relations.³⁴ This letter expressed in detail the Commission’s thinking with respect to Argentina’s rights in Antarctica. After an introduction to the history of the Antarctic continent, which acknowledged that Great Britain was the country that had demonstrated most interest in the region, the letter proceeded to examine the economic, strategic and aeronautical benefits that possession of the region would accrue to Argentina. Unsurprisingly, whaling featured prominently amongst the potential economic advantages that the region could offer Argentina. The Commission also stressed the geological continuity of the Antarctic Peninsula with Tierra del Fuego in making their case that Antarctica could potentially contain a treasure trove of mineral riches. Furthermore, the region presented opportunities for developing new transcontinental flight routes, cutting the distance between Australasia and South America. Interestingly, given the later geopolitical preoccupation with strategy, the Antarctic Commission’s letter noted that: “the lack of resources, the bad ports and the climate, at the present moment take

³⁴ Comisión Nacional del Antártico to Señor José María Cantilo [Minister of Foreign Relations and Worship], Buenos Aires, May 1940. MREYC, Organismos Internacionales, Paquete 20.

away from this region all military and naval strategic importance.”³⁵ In 1940 it was economic and, above all, legal considerations that remained the driving force of Argentine Antarctic policy.

The Argentine Antarctic Commission’s letter continued by asking the all-important question: “within the American sector, does Argentina have rights and could it sustain them? And, in the affirmative case, what are these rights and how far do they stretch?” The letter summarized the theoretical and practical legal precedents that could be relevant to the sovereignty of Antarctica. The principal problem from a legal perspective was that due to its inhospitable climate, the normal legal requirement for proving sovereignty, which was that of effective occupation, could not easily be applied. In these circumstances, Argentina’s Laurie Island meteorological station gave them the legal advantage, shared only by the United States by virtue of the Byrd expedition, of being able to prove some kind of effective occupation of the region. At the same time, following precedents set in the Arctic region, the Argentine Antarctic Commission also stressed the importance of the sector theory and the clear existence of an American Sector in Antarctica.³⁶ This sector belonged to Argentina and Chile by undisputable virtue of its geographical “nearness”. Taken together the arguments put forward by the Commission’s letter presented a convincing case for Argentine sovereignty, with the only caveat that, due to the nature of the sector theory, the Chileans would have to be consulted as to

³⁵ Although they did acknowledge that this might change in the future, with the advance of new technologies

³⁶ The “Sector Theory” had been proposed by Canada in the early twentieth century as a way of dividing the Arctic region into spheres of influence. The idea was that a country would have rights to all regions directly to the north of their territory all the way to the North Pole, with the result that the Arctic would be carved up into various “pie pieces.” The theory was rejected by Norway, but it did offer one legal precedent for the division of Antarctica. See, Puig, *La Antártida argentina ante el derecho*.

limits within the American Sector. Moreno and his colleagues concluded that Argentina ought to claim for themselves the sector between 25° and 68°34' West, south of 60° South.

Following the Argentine Antarctic Commission's letter to the Minister of Foreign Relations, Argentina moved tentatively forward with its ambitions towards Antarctica. Although no formal claim was made, the Argentine government suggested that another international conference should be convened, "insofar as the international political situation shall permit," in order to discuss the question of Antarctic sovereignty.³⁷

Sir Esmond Ovey, the British Ambassador in Buenos Aires, did not think that Argentina was about to claim parts of the Falkland Islands Dependencies:

I do not for a moment believe that it is the intention of the Argentine Gov. to take advantage of GB's present difficulties for the purpose of pressing Argentina's claims. Nor is it clear that at an international conference Argentina would necessarily have the support of the USA, which is believed to have its own claim in Antarctica as a result of Admiral Bird's [sic] recent voyages.³⁸

Other Foreign Office officials in the British Embassy, however, were less optimistic, noting a split within the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs between the pro-British faction headed by José María Cantilo and the nationalist faction headed by vice-President Ramón Castillo.³⁹ The nationalists seemed to want to force the issue while Britain was at war. Meanwhile, by the middle of 1940 the situation in the war

³⁷ British Embassy, BA, to Foreign Office, 13 September 1940. TNA CO 78/213/3.

³⁸ Ovey to Halifax, 13 September 1940. TNA FO118/699.

³⁹ Hand-written memoranda attached to Ovey to Halifax, 13 September 1940. TNA FO118/699.

had become so bad for Great Britain that certain British officials in the Embassy suggested forming some sort of condominium in the Falkland Islands with Argentina.⁴⁰ Ovey decided against pursuing this proposal, thinking it better to “let sleeping dogs lie.”⁴¹ At this stage all the British could do in the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies was wait and see what direction events would take.

THE CHILEAN CLAIM, 1940

During 1940, the Chileans followed a similar course to their South American neighbors by investigating the legal basis for their sovereignty in Antarctica. In Santiago, although Julio Escudero fulfilled a similar role to that of Ruíz Moreno in Buenos Aires, his companion Enrique Cordovez exercised a greater influence than the other members of the Argentine Antarctic Commission. From the outset Cordovez stressed the economic, scientific and strategic bases for Chilean Interest in Antarctica.⁴² There were also other differences between the Argentine and the Chilean approaches to the Antarctic question. Firstly, and most importantly, following the mistranslated letter of January 1940, the Chileans believed themselves to have the backing of the United States in the pursuit of Chilean sovereignty in Antarctica. This gave them a confidence that otherwise they might have lacked.

⁴⁰ After speaking to the American ambassador, R.H. Hadow noted: “Our sole interest in the Falkland Islands is its use to the Navy as a vital strategic point; while the only Argentine interest in the Islands is sentimental national pride. Given the shadow of an Argentine flag waving somewhere - alongside a Union Jack - in the Islands, I am convinced that the Argentines would virtually leave the entire management of the Islands - as a Naval Base - to us. Moreover the naval officers of the Argentine Navy, who are alone likely to visit the place, are surely not hard to win over to our side? I greatly doubt whether an Argentine could be found to take over the Governorship; so that here again our path should be a fairly smooth one?” Hadow, Minutes, 25 June 1940. TNA FO118/699. G.A. Wallinger agreed with him. Wallinger, Minutes, 26 June 1940. TNA, FO118/699.

⁴¹ Ovey, Minutes, 23 July 1940. TNA, FO118/699.

⁴² See, for example, Cordovez, Lecture, 2 August 1940. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-1948.”

Secondly, the Chileans could not claim to have the recent history of effective occupation that the Argentines could demonstrate through their maintenance of the Laurie Island meteorological station. Thirdly, the issue of Antarctica for the Chileans had no connection to the question of the *Malvinas*, although for the Chileans, even more than the Argentines, the rhetoric of territorial loss underpinned many of the arguments for securing Chile's sovereignty rights in Antarctica. Consequently, although Chilean attitudes to Antarctica were superficially very similar to those of the Argentines, they were in some ways quite different.

The arguments that Escudero and Cordovez produced to support Chilean claims to sovereignty in Antarctica fell into two groups: firstly, those of a "juridical-historical" nature, and secondly those of a "scientific" nature. The first group, the traditional legal arguments, followed a fairly conventional pattern. Escudero looked for historical precedents for Chilean administration and occupation of Antarctica, citing Chilean whaling activities, the related administrative acts, and the rescue of Shackleton's expedition. He also cited the Argentine-Chilean negotiations that took place in 1906 and 1908 as international recognition of Chile's rights. Although the Chileans would later put a lot of emphasis on the legal rights that they had inherited from Spain, at this early stage the focus remained on the more modern period.

In the so-called "scientific" arguments in favor of Chilean sovereignty, mainly advanced by Enrique Cordovez, the Chilean Antarctic Commission sought to prove that Chile was nearer and more similar to Antarctica than any other country. At the center of such arguments was the often-cited idea of geological continuity, which had earlier been used by Risopatrón in his 1908 argument for the existence of

an “American Antarctica.”⁴³ Since the Antarctic Peninsula was a geological extension of the Andes Mountains, the argument went (with an interesting leap of logic), the region was part of the South American continent and clearly belonged to Argentina and Chile. Cordovez went as far as proposing that Chile had a superior claim to Antarctica because continent’s snows and ice appeared very similar to the snow and ice of Chilean Patagonia.⁴⁴ One danger of the Chilean “scientific” approach was that it put a great emphasis on the area of southern Patagonia that was also contested by Argentina.

Also at the root of Cordovez’s arguments for Chilean sovereignty was the idea that Antarctica would prove to be economically productive. Just as the idea of Antarctica as a frozen *El Dorado* had shaped Argentina’s decision to press ahead with its claims, the same belief convinced Chileans that they should not be left behind in the impending Scramble for Antarctica. Over the next few years Cordovez would write a series of position papers outlining the economic potential of Antarctica and the ways in which Chile could take advantage.

In the middle of 1940, Don Marcial Mora became the new Chilean Minister of Foreign Relations. On the 8 August, Cordovez wrote a letter to the new minister setting out the Chilean case for polar sovereignty that had been developed by the Chilean Antarctic Commission.⁴⁵ After summarizing the various arguments, the letter concluded that Chile had rights to the region between approximately 60° and 80° West, this area being the same as that which had been discussed in the Chilean-

⁴³ Risopatrón, *La Antártida americana*.

⁴⁴ Enrique Cordovez Madariaga, Internal Memorandum: “Plan Antártico”, 9 August 1943. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48.”

⁴⁵ Enrique Cordovez Madariaga to Don Marcial Mora Miranda, Minister of Foreign Relations, Santiago, 8 August 1940. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-1948.”

Argentine negotiations at the beginning of the century. Cordovez suggested to the new Minister that he should prepare a draft decree to present to Aguirre Cerda, the President of the Republic. At the same time the Navy would prepare a detailed plan for an expedition to take formal possession of *Antártica Chilena*. Once the decree had been passed, Cordóvez suggested that Chile should enter into negotiations with Argentina and with the United States in order to fix the precise limits of Chile's claim to Antarctica:

Once the decree concerning the Chilean possessions in the Antarctic has been passed, it would be apt to enter into discussions with Señor Ruíz Moreno in the Argentine Foreign Ministry. Ruíz Moreno has been designated as the Argentine representative in discussions of the Antarctic question with Chile.

Opportunely, and maybe at the same time, it would be fitting to discuss the following problem with the US Embassy... in order to discuss with the representatives of the said country, in the beginning, the westerly frontier with the claim of the United States.⁴⁶

Such a policy – first pass the decree, then discuss it – suggests both a boldness in Chilean Antarctic policy and a certain flexibility. As Cordovez envisioned the Chilean decree, its limits would not be set in stone, but would be open to negotiation with both Argentina and the United States.

Cordovez's letter to Marcial Mora achieved its objective. The new minister of Foreign Relations quickly became a strong proponent of *Antártida Chilena*, and over the following months the Chilean Antarctic Commission formulated a decree delimiting Chilean sovereignty in Antarctica. On the 6 November 1940, President Aguirre Cerda issued the following decree:

⁴⁶ Ibid.

[Decree 1747] The following form part of the Chilean Antarctic or Chilean Antarctic Territory: all the lands, islands, reefs, glaciers (pack ice), and everything else, known or unknown, and the respective territorial seas, inside the limits of the sector between 53°W and 90°W.⁴⁷

The President understood the difficulty and ridicule that such a decree might cause him.⁴⁸ A friend of the Foreign Minister Marcial Mora had counseled him not to pass the “little decree” due to the international headache it would cause Chile. The limits set by the decree were almost twice those proposed by Cordovez less than three months earlier. These expanded limits would give Chile the room for the diplomatic maneuver that Cordovez had proposed. On the same day as the decree was passed the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Relations issued a verbal note to the Argentine government inviting them to send a delegation to Santiago in order to discuss the question of Antarctic sovereignty.⁴⁹

Outside of Chile, Decree 1747 met with almost universal disapproval. The first reply came from Argentina, where the Chilean claim had caused an outpouring of nationalist condemnation at all levels of society. The Argentine government’s response stated that the only thing that they liked about the Chilean government’s measure was its apparent willingness to amend it.⁵⁰ More of a surprise to Chile than the reply of Argentina was that of the United States, which it received on 10 December 1940. Far from endorsing the Chilean claim as had been expected, the

⁴⁷ Pinochet de la Barra, *Medio siglo de recuerdos antárticos: memorias*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 23.

⁴⁹ Verbal Note. Ministro de RR.EE. al Señor Encargado de Negocios de la República Argentina, 6 November 1940. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Conversaciones, marzo 1941.”

⁵⁰ Ministerio de RR.EE., Internal Memorandum: “Límite del territorio chileno antártico. Decreto que lo establece. Notas cambiadas con Argentina. Invitación para una reunión en Santiago”, 1940. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Conversaciones, marzo 1941.”

Government of the United States in fact politely refused to recognize it.⁵¹ Most unexpectedly of all, the Japanese Government refused to recognize the Chilean claim and reserved Japanese rights in the region.⁵² The Chileans replied in turn to Argentina, the United States and Japan. In the case of Argentina and the United States, Chilean diplomats pointed out their willingness to negotiate the limits of Chilean Antarctica, but insisted on the existence of Chilean rights to the region. In the case of Japan, Chilean officials rejected their reservation outright.⁵³ According to the Chileans, the American sector of Antarctica belonged to Chile, and to Argentina and the United States: countries outside the Western Hemisphere had no sovereignty rights in the region.

Almost three months later, the British Government rejected decree 1747, reminding the Chileans of the Letters Patents of 1908 and 1917, which had defined the limits of the Falkland Islands Dependencies.⁵⁴ British officials noted privately that “these Antarctic claims should lead to an interesting diplomatic *mêlée*”, although they also recognized the united front that was developing against them: “by conveniently stopping short at Longitude 53°, Chile does not clash with the Argentine claim to South Orkneys.”⁵⁵ Despite the delay, the British response was significant because it showed a continued interest in the region. As if to demonstrate

⁵¹ United States Embassy in Santiago to Chilean Foreign Ministry, Santiago, 10 December 1940. Reprinted in Circular Confidencial No.1, 2nd edition, December 1946. RR.EE. “Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48.”

⁵² Legación del Japón a Ministerio de RR.EE., 13 November 1940. Reprinted in Ministerio de RR.EE., Circular Confidencial No.1, 10 February 1941. Ministerio RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48”.

⁵³ Ministerio de RR.EE. a Legación del Japón, 10 February 1941. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48.”

⁵⁴ The English magazine *Cavalcade* had discussed the ramifications of the Chilean Decree shortly after it had passed. Chilean Embassy, London to Chilean Foreign Ministry, 30 December 1940. ARNAD, “M.RR.EE. 4368.”

⁵⁵ Foreign Office Minutes on Argentine newspapers, 13 November 1940. TNA, FO 118/699.

the firmness of its attitude, in March 1941 the British vessel HMS *Queen of Bermuda* landed at Deception Island and destroyed the fuel installations left by the Hektor Whaling Company in order to stop them falling into enemy hands.⁵⁶ This early sign of imperial intransigence, coming despite the preoccupations of the war, helped to lay the foundations for the future sovereignty dispute in Antarctica.

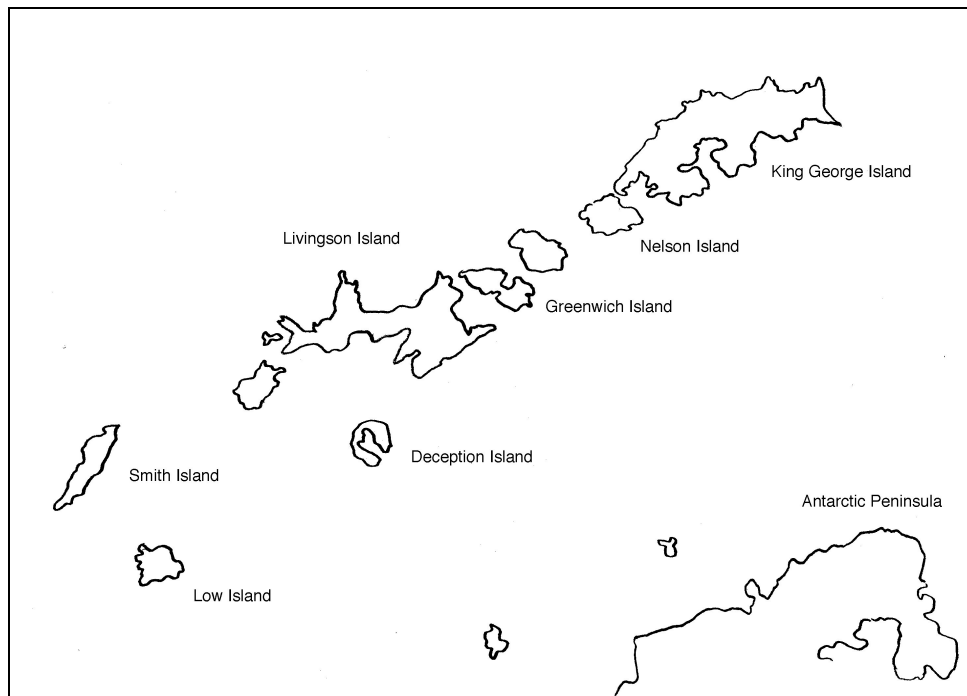


Figure 4: Sketch Map of South Shetland Islands, Showing Deception Island

ESCUADERO-RUÍZ MORENO NEGOTIATIONS, 1941

The Argentine government keenly accepted the Chilean proposal for a meeting to discuss the question of territorial limits in Antarctica, which had been made on the day of Chilean Decree 1747. Ruíz Moreno, the head of the Argentine

⁵⁶ Headland, *Chronological list of Antarctic expeditions and related historical events*.

Antarctic Commission, had repeatedly stressed the need to negotiate with the Chileans in order to strengthen the common South American position.⁵⁷ Despite the overlap of their respective claims, legal theorists from both sides of the Andes saw the advantage to be accrued from working in partnership. However, the Argentine government, in which Julio A. Roca (son of the former President) had recently become Foreign Minister for a second time, wanted to limit the scope of the negotiations.⁵⁸ Argentina had still not formally advanced an official claim to Antarctica in the way that Chile had just done, and because of this its position remained more tentative. Rather than sending the entire Antarctic Commission, the Argentines thought it better to send just Ruíz Moreno, considering that this would give the talks the appearance of preliminary conversations rather than a full-scale diplomatic mission. The Argentine government gave Ruíz Moreno strict instructions not to enter into substantive negotiations with his Chilean counterpart on the future of the Antarctic region.

In contrast to the Argentines, the Chilean government was keen for the negotiations to lead to an immediate and permanent settlement of the Antarctic problem.⁵⁹ Julio Escudero received formal instructions in January 1941:

⁵⁷ Comisión Nacional del Antártico to Señor José María Cantilo, Buenos Aires, May 1940. MREYC, Organismos Internacionales, Paquete 20.

⁵⁸ Isidoro Ruíz Moreno to Julio Roca (jr.), 10 December 1941. AGN, 7:3102. Julio Roca had been Foreign Minister in the early 1930s and had signed the infamous Roca-Runciman Treaty with Great Britain. His second tenure at the Foreign Ministry in the Ortiz-Castillo administration did not last long.

⁵⁹ In preparation for the Escudero-Moreno conversations, the Minister of Foreign Relations requested the Chilean Ambassador in London to search for historical antecedents to the Chilean claim in the archives in London. The documents that they were looking for included a letter from Bernard O'Higgins, the founder of the Chilean state to Coghlan, the British former head of the Chilean Navy written in 1833 and containing references to Chilean possession of the South Shetland Islands. Manuel Bianchi to the Chilean Ambassador in Great Britain, Santiago, 19 December 1940. Ministerio RR.EE., "Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones con Gran Bretaña, 1940-47."

The main object of the conversations in Santiago will consist of trying to determine what is the frontier line between Argentina and Chile in the American Antarctic region, because our claims are situated in this part of the Antarctic territory.⁶⁰

The instructions listed geographical continuity and similarity, geophysical similarity and glaciological similarity as scientific reasons for Chilean sovereignty, adding to these various legal titles derived from the colonial past, previous occupation and the concession of lands and fishing rights.⁶¹ As Escudero saw the case: “the juridical concept of effective occupation (the Argentine position) opposes the concept of continuity and geographical similarity (the Chilean position)”⁶² Interestingly, the Chilean instructions made very little mention of Great Britain’s claims in Antarctica. Instead they focused both on reaching an accord with Argentina and on challenging the Argentine claims to sovereignty. For example, the instructions to Escudero criticized the hydrographic research conducted by Argentina in Antarctica.⁶³ The Chileans hoped to set a legal trap for Argentina: Chile was able to use the idea of continuity (“contigüidad”) because the Argentines used it in their case against Great Britain in the *Malvinas*. The instructions permitted Escudero to use the Monroe Doctrine in supporting Chile’s case, but prohibited him from including the

⁶⁰ Manuel Bianchi, Instructions for the Chilean Delegate in the conversations with the Argentine Delegate, early 1941. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Conversaciones, 1941.”

⁶¹ Bianchi a Escudero, early 1941. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Conversaciones, Marzo 1941.”

⁶² Julio Escudero, Memorandum of Ideas Related to Limits with Argentina, 1941. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Conversaciones 1941.”

⁶³ Cordovez probably wrote this part of the instructions.

substantive discussion of other disputes such as the Beagle Channel or the *Malvinas*.⁶⁴

The Escudero-Ruíz Moreno negotiations took place between the 14 and 26 March 1941.⁶⁵ During the negotiations, Escudero tried to argue that Antarctica was an extension of the American continent, and therefore the Monroe Doctrine could be applied to it without objections; Ruíz Moreno tried to interest the Chileans in shifting their claim to the west.⁶⁶ Both negotiators asserted their sovereign rights through vicinity and the sector theory. When it became clear that no solution would be reached, Escudero and Ruíz Moreno discussed the possibility of a transnational solution to the sovereignty problem.⁶⁷ Although no positive agreement was reached, the two countries agreed to continue the discussion at a later meeting to be convened in Buenos Aires. They also issued a joint statement recognizing the mutual rights of both countries to a “South American Antarctica.”⁶⁸ Escudero expressed his satisfaction at the result of the negotiations because the text of the final act made a specific reference to Chilean sovereignty in Antarctica.⁶⁹ Indeed, Ruíz Moreno was welcomed in Santiago, and received all sorts of honors and banquets in his name.⁷⁰ In Buenos Aires suspicion existed that he had exceeded his brief by entering into

⁶⁴ In relation to *Las Malvinas*, the Chileans clearly did not want to get dragged into Argentina’s dispute with Great Britain. Common cause with Argentina in the question of Antarctica did not imply common cause in the question of the *Malvinas*.

⁶⁵ F. Donoso, Minutes of the Escudero-Ruiz Moreno Conversations, from 14 March 1941 to 26 March 1941. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena. Conversaciones, marzo 1941”.

⁶⁶ Pinochet de la Barra, *Medio siglo de recuerdos antárticos: memorias*. 37.

⁶⁷ Escudero, Memorandum, 31 March 1941. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Conversaciones, Marzo 1941.”

⁶⁸ Argentine Republic. Comisión Nacional del Antártico, *Soberanía argentina en la Antártida. Nota preliminar del Presidente de la Nación, Juan Perón*. 71.

⁶⁹ Escudero, Memorandum, 31 March 1941. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Conversaciones, Marzo 1941”

⁷⁰ See various Chilean and Argentine press cuttings regarding the negotiations. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Conversaciones, Marzo 1941.”

discussions that went beyond merely preparatory dialogue. In particular, many extreme Argentine Nationalists did not like the conversations.⁷¹

Despite their professions of the ideal of a South American Antarctica, Argentina and Chile went away from the negotiations in Santiago thinking about how each could strengthen its own claim at the expense of the other. An interesting result of the conversations was that Escudero decided to investigate in much greater detail the historical antecedents to the Chilean claim, especially those from the colonial era:

I consider it equally indispensable to complete our studies related to our colonial titles, which up until now have only been very briefly studied; and to make a thorough examination of the judicial nature of the polar dominion, all without forgetting the consideration of the theory of the continuation of the Andes on which we await a pronouncement from the Argentine Antarctic Commission.⁷²

The negotiations with Argentina had shown him that vicinity and continuity alone were not enough to strengthen the Chilean claim against the Argentines, who could use precisely the same arguments for themselves. Still unable to put together an expedition to Antarctica, the Chileans hoped to trump their South American neighbors by looking to the colonial past. Meanwhile, the Argentines looked for a more direct way to assert their sovereignty rights in the region.

⁷¹ *Crisol*, [Argentine Newspaper] 28 March 1941. RR.EE. “Antártica Chilena, Conversaciones, 1941.”

⁷² Julio Escudero, Internal Memorandum: Report on the Argentine-Chilean Conversations on Antarctica, Santiago, 31 March 1941. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Conversaciones, 1940.”

ARGENTINE EXPEDITIONS TO ANTARCTICA

On 7 December 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. A conference of American Foreign Ministers was immediately called to discuss the pan-American position with respect to this attack.⁷³ At this meeting, held in Rio de Janeiro in early January 1942, the Argentine Government, now under the effective control of the nationalist leaning Vice President Castillo, conspired to further their territorial ambitions.⁷⁴ The Argentines wanted to be given full responsibility for the defense of the Falkland Islands, which the Japanese had promised them in the event of a successful invasion.⁷⁵ J.V. Perowne, head of the South American Department at the British Foreign Office, condemned the Argentine policy:

These blackmail tactics are what might have been expected of the Government of acting President Castillo and Sr. Ruíz Guiñazu [Foreign Minister]. Either way they have something to gain. If they do not get the Falklands they have an admirable excuse for staying out of the war; if they do get them they at once become national heroes instead of being disliked and despised by 90% of the Argentine public.⁷⁶

British officials successfully put pressure on the United States not to grant Argentine requests, noting that once such a concession had been made it would be virtually impossible ever to get the islands back.⁷⁷ The Argentines responded exactly as

⁷³ For a full discussion of the Rio Conference see Humphreys, *Latin America and the Second World War*. 165-181.

⁷⁴ President Ortiz was incapacitated by diabetic blindness.

⁷⁵ Ovey to Foreign Office, 12 December 1941. TNA, ADM 116/5104.

⁷⁶ J.V. Perowne, Minute, 20 December 1941. TNA, ADM 116/5104.

⁷⁷ For example, Halifax told Cordell Hull that the British would not contemplate concessions to Argentina regarding the Falkland Islands: "I said that, as Hull would appreciate, any such suggestion would be very distasteful to us and asked him, therefore, to see that Welles should jump on the idea if it were put forward. Hull seemed to agree and made a note of my remarks." Halifax to Foreign Office, 11 January, 1942. TNA, ADM 116/5104. The Americans, growing ever more frustrated with an Argentine position that refused to accept any "junior partnership", did not force the issue. Hadow to Foreign Office, 4 March, 1942. TNA, ADM 116/5104. But, as the British thought of ways to defend the Falklands, United States' pan-American concerns continued to be a problem. Halifax

Perowne had predicted, refusing to break off relations with the Axis nations.⁷⁸ Chile, which shared the Argentine problem of having a large population of German immigrants, and additionally feared a Japanese attack against its long, unprotected coastline, also refused to break off relations with the Axis. The two South American countries involved in the growing Antarctic Problem were the only two states in the Americas that did not sever relations with Germany, Japan and Italy in the months following the raid on Pearl Harbor.

As Argentine politicians and diplomats argued unsuccessfully for territorial concessions at the conference of Rio, the Argentine Navy put into action their claims to sovereignty in Antarctica. The Argentine government had been planning an expedition to Antarctica since the conclusion of the Ruíz Moreno-Escudero negotiations early in 1941. This had been one of the major recommendations of the *Comisión Nacional del Antártico* in its earlier report on Argentine sovereignty.⁷⁹ In October 1941, in preparation for the expedition, Argentina's *Instituto Geográfico Militar* published another map of Argentine Antarctica, this time at a scale of 1:2,500,000.⁸⁰ As if to emphasize the superficiality of any concept of South American Antarctica, this map made no mention of Chilean rights to Antarctica. To strengthen further their legal title to the region, the Argentines established a Post

reported a later meeting with Roosevelt: "the President at once said that there was only one difficulty, which was the Argentine whom he was at the present moment trying to 'appease' as much as possible. It would be a bore to get them upset just at this moment." Halifax to Foreign Office, 28 January 1942. TNA, CAB 121/510.

⁷⁸ Humphreys, *Latin America and the Second World War*.

⁷⁹ Argentine Republic. Comisión Nacional del Antártico, *Soberanía argentina en la Antártida. Nota preliminar del Presidente de la Nación, Juan Perón*.

⁸⁰ Genest and Instituto Antártico Argentino, *Antartida sudamericana aportes para su comprension*. 24.

Office at the Laurie Island meteorological station in the South Orkneys.⁸¹ Amidst all this escalating Argentine Antarctic activity, the British Ambassador in Buenos Aires reported that territorial nationalism was fast becoming an “integral part” of Argentine nationalist rhetoric.⁸²

The *1° de Mayo* left Buenos Aires in January 1942 under the command of Captain Alberto J. Oddera.⁸³ The ship first visited Deception Island, where it conducted an inventory of the abandoned factory of the Norwegian Héktor Whaling Company and hoisted the Argentine flag.⁸⁴ From Deception Island it sailed on to the Melchior Archipelago where it put up a small automatic lighthouse in Dallman Bay. Next, the crew landed on Winter Island where it performed similar ceremonies of possession. After a failed attempt to reach Marguerite Bay, the *1° de Mayo* returned to Buenos Aires via the Melchior Archipelago and the Argentine Islands. During the voyage Lieutenant Eduardo Lanusse, in a Stearman seaplane type 76-D-1, took the first aerial photographs of the region.

In Santiago, the Argentine expedition to Antarctica caused certain unease.⁸⁵ Throughout 1942, the Ministry of Foreign Relations in loose partnership with the

⁸¹ On 14 November 1941, Ovey sent a telegram to the Foreign Office reporting the establishment by the Argentine Government of a post office in the South Orkneys. Foreign Office to Ovey, February 1942. TNA, CAB 121/510. Postal services and stamp issues would become a central, if slightly tedious, part of the sovereignty dispute over the coming years. See, for example, Peter Beck, "Argentina's 'Philatelic Annexation' of the Falklands," *History Today* 33 (1983).

⁸² Ovey to Eden, Buenos Aires, 14 November 1941. In Dunkerly, J (ed.). 1998. *British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Part III From 1940 through 1945, Series D: Latin America*, University Publications of America. Volume 2. 223. 16187, FO 420/294.

⁸³ Argentine Republic. Comisión Nacional del Antártico, *Soberanía argentina en la Antártida. Nota preliminar del Presidente de la Nación, Juan Perón*. 71.

⁸⁴ The previous summer the whaling factory had been blown up and burnt by the British in order to avoid the facilities being used by German submarines. Genest and Instituto Antártico Argentino, *Antartida sudamericana aportes para su comprensión*. 25.

⁸⁵ For Example, On 3 March 1942, the Chilean Ambassador handed a memorandum to the Argentine Minister of Foreign Affairs protesting the publication of the *Instituto Geográfico Militar's* map of Antarctica. Ibid. 24. During 1942 there was a breakdown in Chilean communications and intelligence related to the region. Officials in the Estado Mayor de la Armada, the Navy's political department,

Navy made renewed attempts to prepare the “Vidal Gomez” for an expedition to Antarctica, in large part as a response to the Argentine expedition.⁸⁶ But just as in the previous two years, the Ministry of Marine decided that the vessel was unfit for sailing to Antarctica, and there was no other suitable vessel available.⁸⁷

In the midst of these logistical difficulties, the Chilean Government received an invitation from Buenos Aires suggesting that both countries should send an expedition to Antarctica in the season 1942-43.⁸⁸ Without a suitable boat, the Chileans obviously could not accept this proposal. In an attempt to make the most of a bad situation, the Chilean head of the *Estado Mayor* of the Navy suggested a compromise arrangement with the Argentines. Under the terms of their proposal, Chilean officials would accompany the Argentine expedition this year, and in exchange Argentine officials would accompany the Chileans in the following year. The Chilean Navy, perhaps somewhat naively given the international situation, hoped that this promise would put pressure on its own Government to look abroad for a suitable ship to buy.⁸⁹ The Argentine Naval Minister accepted the Chilean suggestion, and the two countries thus entered into a binding agreement.

only heard vague rumors about the Argentine expedition until it was confirmed by the October 1942 edition of the Argentine magazine *Brújula*. Gerken a Jefe de la Armada, 1 October 1942. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

⁸⁶ Enrique Cordovez Madariaga, Confidential Memorandum No.32, 1 October 1942. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-1948.” The Chilean Antarctic Commission had also spent time during 1942 changing various Antarctic place names to make them sound more Chilean, for example, Trinidad Peninsula became Peninsula Bernardo O’Higgins, after the great liberator and national hero. Cordovez, Memorandum, 28 July 1942. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

⁸⁷ Jefe del EMA al Jefe de la Armada, 2 December 1942. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

⁸⁸ Jefe del Estado Mayor de la Armada to the Commander in Chief of the Navy, Valparaiso, 2 December 1942. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministerios, 1940-1949”. It is probable that Argentine officials knew about Chile’s lack of a suitable vessel.

⁸⁹ Jefe del Estado Mayor de la Armada al Jefe de la Armada, Valparaiso, 23 December 1942. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministerios, 1940-1949.”

The Argentine invitation to three officials of the Chilean Navy to accompany the 1942/43 expedition to Antarctica was accompanied by an exchange of notes reaffirming the existence of a “South American Antarctica”:

Both governments signaled their desire to proceed in agreement in everything that concerns the Antarctic problem, to avoid every possible conflict, and through the agreement to undertake a joint action with the aim of affirming – without making new claims – the sovereign rights of both countries in South American Antarctica.⁹⁰

The *1° de Mayo* under the command of Captain Silvano Harriague left Buenos Aires for a second voyage to Antarctica on the 4th February. This expedition took three Chilean naval officials including retired Captain D. Enrique Cordovez Madariaga, one of the two members of the Chilean Antarctic Commission. The Argentines promised that the purpose of the expedition was purely for the purposes of scientific inquiry.⁹¹ The expedition again visited the Melchior archipelago and then sailed to Port Lockroy. From Port Lockroy the *1° de Mayo* continued to Marguerite Bay, where Byrd’s East Base had been located throughout 1940. The Argentine ship took away certain scientific instruments that had been left by the American expedition when it was evacuated.⁹² Despite promises to the contrary, the Argentine Expedition performed acts of possession at Port Lockroy (1 March, 1943), Marguerite Bay (5

⁹⁰ Ministerio de RR.EE., Confidential Memorandum No.200, Santiago, 28 December, 1944. RR.EE., “Antártico, 1939-52.”

⁹¹ For the use of the rhetoric of science to hide Argentine political ambition and Chilean political weakness see, Jefe del EMA al Jefe de la Armada, 2 December 1942. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.” Also see, Ministerio de RR.EE. (Chile) a Embajada Argentina, 29 January 1943. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

⁹² Cordovez Madariaga, *La Antártida sudamericana*. The removal of United States equipment would later result in a bitter international incident (See Chapter 3).

March), and Deception Island (11 March). In a top-secret report to the Ministry of Foreign Relations, Cordovez Madariaga noted that “These acts of possession represented a cause of shame for the Chileans who had traveled with the Argentine expedition.”⁹³ In a sense, the idea of a “South American Antarctica” was flawed from the start.

Following the second Argentine expedition to Antarctica there was a temporary lull in South American activity in the region. In Argentina, a military coup in June 1943 ousted the government of Ramón Castillo and replaced it with a group of military officers. Near the center of this coup was a secretive lodge of mid-ranking officers known as the GOU, which included an ambitious Colonel called Juan Domingo Perón. The overthrow of the *Concordancia* government represented the end, at least temporarily, of the elite rule that had supported British interests in Argentina. The coup threw the country into a period of political uncertainty that would last for the next three years, and this uncertainty put a hold on Antarctic activity.⁹⁴ The military officers were no less nationalistic than the Castillo government. In fact, in the latter part of 1943, British officials feared that the Antarctic dispute was about to enter a “critical phase.”⁹⁵ But, as it turned out, the new government gave a relatively low priority to the Antarctica. The new military government worried about the negative diplomatic and military costs of continued

⁹³ J. Fernandez, Ministerio RR.EE., to Ministry of National Defense. Sends Report by Enrique Cordovez, Santiago, 22 April 1943. Ministerio RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministerios, 1940-1949”. Although in his published account of the Argentine expedition *Antártida Sudamericana* published in 1945 the Chilean admiral made no reference to these claims.

⁹⁴ Argentine Republic. Comisión Nacional del Antártico, *Soberanía argentina en la Antártida. Nota preliminar del Presidente de la Nación, Juan Perón*. 72.

⁹⁵ Perowne to Acheson, 2 November 1943. TNA, DO 35/890/10. It was at this point that the Foreign Office decided to compile a confidential booklet with reference to the sovereignty dispute. Brian Roberts would write this booklet, but its contents remain closed at time of research.

international isolationism.⁹⁶ Therefore they played down, although by no means renounced, the most antagonistic of their foreign policies, including their claims to the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies.⁹⁷

Throughout 1943, Chilean officials continued to search abroad for a suitable vessel to sail to Antarctica. They hoped to send an expedition to Antarctica both to assert Chilean sovereignty in the region, and in order to keep the previous December's promise to Argentina that they would take with them several Argentine officials.⁹⁸ As had been foreseen, certain officials, particularly in the Navy, used the promise to Argentina to put pressure on their government to purchase a boat. Unsurprisingly, however, given the circumstances of the war, no such boat could be found.⁹⁹ The harsh conditions of the Antarctic environment put a check on Chilean political ambitions. Despite the inability of the Chilean Government to send an expedition to Antarctica, Escudero and Cordovez in the Chilean Antarctic Commission continued to produce policy papers encouraging Chilean involvement with the Antarctic continent. In particular, Cordovez and others focused upon the possibilities for Chilean whaling activities in the Antarctic region.¹⁰⁰ The broken promise to Argentina remained at the back of Chilean official minds, and it was

⁹⁶ Dunkerly, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs, Part III From 1940 through 1945, Series D: Latin America*, University Publications of America, Volume 7. 157. 16506, FO 461/2, Kelly to Eden, 18 June 1943.

⁹⁷ War Cabinet Joint Intelligence Committee (44) 432, 9th October 1944. TNA CAB 121/510.

⁹⁸ As late as August 1943, Cordovez was making plans about where to hoist Chilean flags and paint the words "Chilean Antarctic Territory". Cordovez, Memorandum, 9 August 1943. RR.EE., "Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48."

⁹⁹ Escudero a Ministro de RR.EE., 22 October 1943. RR.EE., "Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49."

¹⁰⁰ Ravanal, Memorandum, 23 September 1943. RR.EE., "Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48". See also Carta de Oscar Pinochet de la Barra a Joaquín Fernández, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores sobre su libro *La Antártida Chilena*, 13 November 1944. RR.EE., "Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48."

hoped that Chile would be able to keep its word by sending an expedition South at the end of the war.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Escudero Otrola a Ministro de RR.EE., 22 October 1943. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

Chapter 2: Operation Tabarin, 1943-1946

Even in the darkest days of the Second World War, the British refused to give up on their Empire. Whether this imperial intransigence would extend to the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies, however, was not immediately clear. In Argentina, the growing nationalist sentiment towards the *Islas Malvinas* and *Antártida Argentina* created an awkward overlap of formal and informal empire. Throughout the war, Argentina continued to supply a significant percentage of Britain's food supplies. As the Foreign Office continually pointed out, the maintenance of good relations with Argentina was therefore a vital part of the British war effort. In the early years of the conflict, certain British officials had discussed using the Falkland Islands Dependencies as a bargaining counter to retain Argentina's goodwill. There had even been some discussion of a cession of the Falkland Islands themselves. South American nationalism created a situation whereby Britain's retention of its formal empire in the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies appeared to jeopardize retention of its "informal empire" in Argentina.

However, as the war progressed, and as Britain's position in the conflict improved, officials in London began to make plans not only for the maintenance of Britain's informal empire in South America, but also for the retention of British sovereignty in the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies. The inter-connectedness of the imperial system was both a weakness and a source of strength. The need to retain good relations with Argentina constrained Britain's freedom of action in Antarctica. But at the same time, the need to maintain prestige and avoid setting a bad precedent encouraged the British to take a firm stand in Antarctica.

After reinforcing the security of the Falkland Islands themselves, Great Britain took the initiative in the nascent Antarctic sovereignty dispute by sending an expedition of permanent occupation to the region. Operation Tabarin, as the expedition became known after a famous Parisian nightclub, sought to fulfill the legal requirement of “effective occupation” which would be useful if the dispute were ever to go arbitration. In order not to upset the nationalist sensibilities of Argentina and Chile, the expedition was initially kept secret. By the end of the war, Operation Tabarin had established four bases in the Falkland Islands Dependencies; a fifth base, at Stonington Island, was established in the 1945-46 season. The British residents of these bases began to conduct various scientific programs, which examined the geology, meteorology, glaciology, and the biology of the Peninsula region. The British were not exempt from beliefs in Antarctica as a potential *El Dorado*, and economic prospecting was high up the rudimentary scientific agenda. Although the scientific component of Operation Tabarin remained relatively modest, it helped to reinforce the connection between science and politics in Antarctica.

The Second World War had led to a suspension of the profitable Antarctic whaling industry. This hiatus helped whale populations to recover from the over-fishing that had taken place in the late 1930s. In the immediate aftermath of the war, British and Norwegian whaling vessels returned to Antarctic waters and the whaling industry resumed. There was a desperate need for foodstuffs across war-ravaged Europe and whale oil was in great demand. In an attempt to prevent a return to the unsustainable practices of the 1930s, representatives from the principal whaling nations met in Washington D.C. to negotiate the International Whaling Convention (IWC). This convention sought to impose a quota on the total number of whales that could be caught in any given season. Although the IWC was not directly related to

the sovereignty dispute, whaling remained the only profitable industry in Antarctica and therefore had a significant influence upon the way in which the continent was viewed economically. In Britain's eyes, empire had to pay for itself, and the whaling industry continued to offer the possibility that British sovereignty in Antarctica could be financially self-sufficient.¹

THE FUTURE OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Owing to the strategic importance of the South Atlantic, the British Government responded to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 by establishing a volunteer garrison of 300 men in the Falkland Islands. On top of its strategic value, the Falklands Islands Crown Colony also represented a very symbolic part of the British Empire, whose loss, Churchill would later note, would be a major blow to British prestige. From the outset, defense of the colony had the twin objectives of guarding against the Axis threat and against the threat posed by Argentina. The *Falkland Islands Defence Scheme* booklet, published by the War Office late in 1939, emphasized the Argentine threat:

The islands are claimed by a foreign government, which might, if unfriendly to Great Britain, be tempted to profit by our temporary embarrassment in other parts of the world to throw in its lot with the enemy in order to endeavour to assert its alleged rights.²

¹ J. O. Borley and Interdepartmental Committee on research and development in the dependencies of the Falkland Islands., *Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on research and development in the dependencies of the Falkland Islands : with appendices, maps, ... : presented to Parliament by command of His Majesty* (London, 1920).

² *Falkland Islands Defence Scheme, 1939*, p.6 "Scale and Form of Attack." TNA, CAB 120/516.

The Argentines did not take kindly to the garrisoning of the Falkland Islands, especially since many of the volunteers were drawn from the British community in Argentina.³ The defence of Britain's formal empire weakened Britain's informal connections in Argentina. Tensions caused by the sovereignty dispute led to differences of opinion between the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office. The Colonial Office wanted to protest the extension of Argentine claims from the Falkland Islands themselves to the Antarctic Peninsula region, while the Foreign Office resisted this suggestion, fearing a bad reaction from Argentina.⁴

In the early months of the war, several Foreign Office officials, keen to preserve the traditional friendship between Britain and Argentina, even entertained suggestions that the Falklands should be handed over to Argentina.⁵ Others thought that ceding the Falkland Islands Dependencies, or at least the South Orkney Islands, could placate the Argentines.⁶ The Colonial Office, in contrast, adopted a very paternalistic attitude not only to the Crown Colony itself but also to the Dependencies, and refused to consider relinquishing any British territories in the South Atlantic.⁷ The differences of opinion between the Foreign Office and Colonial Office were highlighted by the strained relationship between the British Embassy in Buenos Aires and the Governor in Stanley.⁸

³ New York Times, "Argentina moves to gain Falkland Islands", 23 October 1939. TNA, FO 371/22715.

⁴ Barlow, Minutes, 13 July 1939. TNA, CO 78/211/9.

⁵ Roberts to Ovey, 26 September 1939. TNA, FO 118/699.

⁶ Perowne, Minutes, 27 June 1939. TNA, FO 371/22714.

⁷ A Colonial Office official noted: "On the merits, it is hardly conceivable that we could hand over to a S. American Republic a population consisting almost exclusively of Scottish sheep farmers and shepherds." Barlow, Minutes, 13 November 1939. TNA CO 78/211/9.

⁸ Bevir, Minutes, 29 May 1939. TNA CO 78/211/9.

The threat to the Falkland Islands did not come from Argentina alone. Japanese advances across the Pacific late in 1941 and into 1942 made British officials fear for the security of the Falkland Islands, guarded only by a small force of three hundred volunteers.⁹ As early as September 1941, Colonel Russell, the Military Attaché to Buenos Aires, had warned of the possibility of a Japanese invasion of the islands, and immediately considered the Argentine dimension of such a threat:

The reaction in Argentina to a successful Japanese raid on the Falkland Islands would... be entirely unfavourable to us. Almost the only success of German propaganda in this country has been the stirring up of the old controversy over the ownership of the Falkland Islands, and even our best friends would be tempted to think “serve you right, you ought to have handed them back to us if you cannot even protect them yourselves.”¹⁰

Security concerns in the Falklands could not be detached from Argentine claims. Even the top secret “Scorched Earth Policy” devised for the Falkland Islands and South Georgia worried about the possible response by the Argentines to the destruction of their whaling stations in South Georgia.¹¹ As the Japanese advanced

⁹ Extract from C.O.S. (41) 433 Meeting held on 24 December 1941. TNA, CAB 121/510. The volunteer soldiers were armed with rifles, 13 miscellaneous automatic weapons, two 6-inch naval guns, two 12-pounders, and two 3-pounders. Japanese advances in Asia notoriously resulted in the fall of Singapore, defended from a naval attack but exposed to an attack by land, in February 1942.

¹⁰ Falkland Islands: Defenses and British Expedition to Falkland Island Dependencies, 1941-1944.” TNA, ADM 116/5104.

¹¹ “Scorched Earth Policy, Falkland Islands and South Georgia, 1942.” TNA, CO 968/82/8. At the Colonial Office Acheson noted: “The company and the Argentine gov. may not be on strong grounds in protesting against the destruction of their stocks, if that should be necessary: but they may have good ground for protesting against measures which in practice put them out of business before the enemy attack [no storing of stocks]. Moreover, if they are put out of business in South Georgia they may be induced to start up in South Shetlands or elsewhere in the Dependencies, and that would be a good deal more embarrassing politically as well as otherwise. I should not have thought there was any great point in this particular stipulation...” Acheson, Minutes, 26 March 1942. TNA, CO 968/82/8.

relentlessly through Asia and across the Pacific, the perceived threat to the islands grew ever greater.

Over-stretched British troops could scarcely be spared to defend the Falkland Islands, and the logistical difficulties of getting them there made such a move even less practicable. The Chiefs of Staff, who were seriously worried about a Japanese invasion, therefore took the unilateral decision to plead with their new American allies for assistance. On Christmas Eve 1941, the Chiefs of Staff cabled their mission in Washington with instructions to approach the Americans, without consulting either the Foreign Office or the Colonial Office.¹² Three days later, before any contact had been made, the Colonial Office learnt of this telegram. A top Colonial Office official wrote angrily to the Chiefs of Staff:

We would very much like to have been informed that this proposal was under consideration. We feel that suggestions for garrisoning a British colony with US troops may raise important and possibly embarrassing political issues which ought to be considered before the American Government is approached.¹³

The Foreign Office, markedly hardening its line on the Falklands question, also complained to the Chiefs of Staff.¹⁴ General Ismay, head of the Chiefs of Staff, responded tersely to this criticism:

¹² Chiefs of Staff, Minutes of Meeting, 24 December 1941. TNA, CAB 121/510.

¹³ Parkinson to Price, 27 December 1941. TNA, CAB 121/510.

¹⁴ Sargent noted: "I am sure that you will agree that an invitation to a foreign power to occupy British territory is a matter for consideration by the War Cabinet. In the case of the Falklands, a number of complicated political issues are involved. The Argentines have long laid claim to the islands and, according to some recent information are actually submitting to Washington a scheme of defence for the South Atlantic which contemplates the cession to them, in complete sovereignty, of the colony. We do not know what the American reaction to this has been, but it may be supposed that, should they be willing to garrison the Falkland Islands at our suggestion, they will (on the analogy of the Brazilian association with the US defence of Dutch Guinea and the State Department's desire that Venezuela

As I believe the Chiefs of Staff see the problem, the alternatives are as follows: - (a) Assistance in the defence of the Falkland Islands by the USA with all its consequent political disadvantages; or (b) Occupation by the Japanese. Between these two stark alternatives there does not seem to be much room for manoeuvre.¹⁵

However, faced with such broad internal dissent, the Chiefs of Staff retracted their decision to approach the Americans, and set about finding another way to defend the islands.

Facing an imperial problem, the British sought an imperial solution. South African troops had already been considered and found to be unavailable; West Indian or African troops were thought unsuitable due to the inclement climate of the Falkland Islands.¹⁶ The Chiefs of Staff therefore made a decision, this time after consultation with the Foreign and Colonial Offices, to approach the Canadian government and request Canadian troops to garrison the Falkland Islands.¹⁷ However, Mackenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister, decided not to send

should be associated with the US in the defence of Curacao and Aruba) at the very least, insist that the Argentines should be associated with them in any defence of the Falklands. What view the Argentines might take of such a suggestion, in view of their claims, is not certain, but they are behaving thoroughly badly as regards the war, and we can be pretty sure that they will be reluctant to let slip any opportunity of twisting our tails or of blackmailing the Americans, who need to placate them in order to achieve a united pan-American front at the Rio Conference." Sargent to Ismay, 1 January 1942. TNA, CAB 121/510. With the nationalist leaning vice-President Castillo now in full control of the Argentine government, the Foreign Office had less reason to "appease" the Argentina in the hope of making life easier for pro-British factions among the government. There was increasing frustration in Britain about continued Argentine neutrality.

¹⁵ Ismay to Sargent, 1 January 1942. TNA, CAB 121/510.

¹⁶ Ismay to Churchill, 16 March 1942. TNA, CAB 121/510.

¹⁷ For a detailed discussion of the Anglo-Canadian negotiations, see Galen Roger Perras, "Anglo-Canadian Imperial Relations: the Case of the Garrisoning of the Falkland Islands in 1942," *War & Society [Australia]* 14 (1996). Perowne sent instructions to Halifax that he should inform the US President of the approach to the Canadians, adding "For your information we are anxious to be able to reassure Canadian Prime Minister without appearing to refer to US Gov for permission to reinforce a British colony with British troops." Perowne to Halifax, January 1942. TNA, CAB 121/510.

Canadian troops to the Falkland Islands, arguing that Canada was already fully involved in the war in Europe.¹⁸

With reports circulating of an early Japanese seizure of the islands, the War Cabinet continued to face the stark question of how to defend their Crown Colony in the South Atlantic.¹⁹ Clement Attlee, Dominions Secretary, suggested that Churchill should apply pressure to Mackenzie King. The Chiefs of Staff, annoyed by a continued failure to approach Washington, proposed that the Falklands should be left defenseless. Winston Churchill chose this moment to intervene personally in the Falklands question. Discovering that transport might be available, the Prime Minister stated that British troops should be sent to garrison the islands:

The Falklands are very well known, and their loss would be a shock to the whole Empire. They would certainly have to be retaken. The object of the reinforcement would be to make it necessary for the Japanese to extend their attacking force to a tangible size. This might well act as a deterrent.²⁰

Following the Prime Minister's orders, the Eleventh Battalion West Yorks were diverted from their intended duties in India and sent instead to the Falklands. They arrived in Stanley at the beginning of August 1942.²¹

¹⁸ The telegraph informing the Dominions Office of this decision arrived in London on 13 March 1942. TNA, CAB 121/510.

¹⁹ Hadow to Foreign Office, 7 March 1942. TNA, CAB 121/510.

²⁰ Churchill to Ismay, 1 April 1942. TNA, CAB 121/510.

²¹ The Japanese did not attack the Falkland Islands. The two thousand soldiers of the West Yorkshire Regiment were left to sit out the war in the relative serenity of Britain's South Atlantic outpost. The officers' official diaries recorded little more exciting than the changes in the bleak South Atlantic weather. TNA, WO 176/67. In March 1943 a report from the Joint Intelligence Subcommittee concluded that there was "no likelihood of a Japanese attack on the islands." Memorandum by the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 19 October 1943. TNA, CAB 121/510. However, due, in part, to a continued suspicion of Argentine territorial ambition, it would take several more official reports before the Eleventh Battalion West Yorks were relieved by soldiers from the Scots Guards, almost two years later, see Cawkell, *The Falkland Islands*. Meanwhile, a note from the West

The arrival of 2000 British soldiers in the Falkland Islands effectively put an end to any debate over the Crown Colony's future. Henceforth any Argentine invasion would not only constitute a legal act of war, but would also almost certainly result in armed conflict between the two countries. The British population of the Falklands, limited in numbers though it might be, severely limited the scope for Argentine activities in and around the Islands. For the next twenty years the Argentine government would focus its efforts on the virtually unpopulated Antarctic Peninsula, where its freedom of action was much greater. The Falkland Islands themselves would not become a central question again until the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 had resolved the "Antarctic Problem."²²

OPERATION TABARIN

As the Argentines pushed their claims to the Antarctic Peninsula and surrounding sub-Antarctic Islands during the austral summer 1941/42, the British could not separate the question of the Falkland Islands Dependencies from the question of the Falkland Islands themselves. Replying to Esmond Ovey's note about the establishment of a Post Office in the South Orkney Islands, Foreign Office officials noted:

Argentine Government are obviously seeking to build up a claim by occupation to sovereignty over the South Orkneys, and I am advised that

Yorkshire Regiment's medical officer warned that "the medical evidence is that the isolated and remote situation of the Falkland Islands, combined with constant high winds and general bleakness and monotony, induces a depressed mental outlook, which will cause deterioration in efficiency after eighteen months in the islands." TNA CAB 121/510.

²² In the 1960s, the "Falklands (*Malvinas*)" would become a significant issue in the United Nations, as Argentina pushed its rights.

there is some danger that unless we take counter-measures they may establish a claim which it would be difficult to contest. It is desirable to take action to preserve our title (a) on strategic grounds (b) because the better our title the greater its value as a bargaining counter in any dispute concerning the Falklands.²³

At this stage, the Foreign Office clearly saw the Falkland Islands as being more valuable than the Dependencies, and even contemplated making concessions in Antarctica in order to strengthen their position in the Crown Colony. For a time, British retention of the Falkland Islands Dependencies was based partly upon the potential of using the region as a bargaining counter in the Falklands dispute with Argentina. Paradoxically, the possibility of giving up rights in Antarctica went hand in hand with the necessity of strengthening British titles to the region, since ceding a weakly claimed area meant much less than making a genuine territorial concession.

As British officials debated the best way to defend the Falkland Islands, the South American threat to the Dependencies continued to grow. The British Government had responded to the Argentine actions in the Antarctic season of 1941/42 by sending a letter to Sir Esmond Ovey instructing him to make a formal protest to the Argentine Government. The situation was complicated by the replacement of Sir Esmond Ovey as British Ambassador to Argentina by Sir David Kelly.²⁴ Inheriting the orders from the Foreign Office to make an official protest to the Argentine Government, Kelly worried about the effect that such a protest would have upon already inflamed Argentine public opinion. In the circumstances he deemed that an approach to the Argentine government would do more harm than

²³ Foreign Office to Ovey, February 1942. TNA, CAB 121/510.

²⁴ David Kelly, *The ruling few; or The human background to diplomacy* (London, 1952).

good to British interests, and he simply ignored the orders from London. He justified his insubordination by resorting to the specter of Nazism in Argentina:

I wish to make it clear that this [the Falklands issue] is one political question on which all Argentines are agreed and if (which of course may be untrue) Minister for Foreign Affairs is really pro-German and determined at all costs to avoid breaking off relations we might be presenting him with a heaven sent opportunity.²⁵

As the "man on the spot", Kelly enjoyed an inordinate influence in shaping the Anglo-Argentine relationship, and he clearly regarded the maintenance of good relations as being more important than legal wrangling over the sovereignty of an icy wasteland.

In the 1942-43 season, in order to counter moves being made by the Argentine *1º de Mayo* in the Falkland Islands Dependencies, the Admiralty dispatched HMS *Carnarvon Castle* to the region. The precise nature of the orders to be given to this British ship became a hotly disputed, and at times almost farcical, topic.²⁶ The Foreign Office wanted to avoid an armed confrontation at any cost. Throughout these discussions, the Foreign Office made repeated reference to the importance of Anglo-Argentine relations, which, according to Perowne "were of importance to His Majesty's Government in innumerable ways."²⁷ "Apart from the British capital (£400,000,000) invested in Argentina and of our import and export trade," Perowne added, "an incident of this sort [a violent clash] would be the one

²⁵ "Falkland Island Dependencies: Encroachment by Argentina, 1942-1943", Kelly to Foreign Office, telegram, 16 October 1942. TNA, ADM 116/4670.

²⁶ Minutes of meeting held at Foreign Office, 6 January 1943. TNA, ADM 116/4670.

²⁷ J.V. Perowne, Minutes of meeting held at Foreign Office, 11 January 1943. TNA, ADM 116/4670.

thing which might imperil our essential meat imports from Argentina." Not only did Foreign Office Officials remain hesitant about engaging in an active dispute with the Argentines, but they also queried the relative worth of holding onto the dependencies at all. As it turned out, the *Carnarvon Castle* made no contact with the Argentines during its "administrative tour" of the Dependencies, although it did remove sovereignty markers left by the recent Argentine expedition.

On 11 February 1943, Sir David Kelly, the British ambassador in Argentina, finally made an official communication – although not a formal protest – to the Argentine government. Referring to the actions of the HMS *Carnarvon Castle* he said: "naturally we used the occasion to take away the cited objects [sovereignty markers]." The Argentine Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores issued a memorandum on the 15 February answering the British note. This memorandum challenged the British action and reaffirmed Argentine sovereign rights over all the Antarctic lands and dependencies.²⁸ Apart from this official reply, nationalists in Argentina did not respond to the British statement in the extreme ways in which Kelly had previously feared.

Amidst the debates surrounding the voyage of HMS *Carnarvon Castle* to the Antarctic Peninsula in the season of 1942/43, the Foreign Office convened a series of meetings to discuss the longer-term possibilities of strengthening the British title to the Falkland Islands Dependencies. Early in the proceedings, Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, argued that the legal benefits of simply making protests in the Antarctic question were far from obvious, and added that a protest without some

²⁸ Argentine Republic. Comisión Nacional del Antártico, *Soberanía argentina en la Antártida. Nota preliminar del Presidente de la Nación, Juan Perón*. 72.

form of renewed administrative action would in any case be useless.²⁹ Eden's comments effectively threw down the gauntlet to the Colonial Office and the Admiralty: either they would have to support their imperial rhetoric with actions, or they should let the matter drop. The Colonial Office retained an unswerving commitment to British sovereignty in the Falkland Islands Dependencies, and with backing from the Governor of the Falklands, suggested a series of administrative visits. The Admiralty supported the Colonial Office position by supplying the Foreign Office with a long list of strategic reasons for continued British sovereignty in the region, and sealed the issue by agreeing to finance an expedition of "effective occupation" out of its own Treasury Votes.³⁰ Dogged attachment to the Dependencies from both the Colonial Office and the Admiralty, combined with assurances that no violent confrontation with Argentina would result, convinced the Foreign Office that no cession should take place.

Informed, at last, by agreement among the Departments, the War Cabinet took the decision, early in 1943, to take all possible steps to safeguard British Sovereignty in the Falkland Islands Dependencies.³¹ The war cabinet took this

²⁹ Perowne to Secretary of Admiralty, 23 October 1942. TNA, CAB 121/510

³⁰ H.N. Morrison to the Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 26 November 1942. This money, they hoped, would be recouped through taxes on the Whaling industry. TNA, CAB 121/510.

³¹ Copy of letter, reference AS 1756/8/51 dated 25 March 1947 from the Foreign Office to the Secretary, Chiefs of Staff Committee. TNA, CAB 121/510. "In a memorandum dated 27th January, 1943 (Cabinet Paper W.P. (43) 41), the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs drew the attention of the War Caninet to the situation created by Argentine encroachments against certain Antarctic Dependencies of the Falkland Islands Colony. As a result, the War Cabinet decided that all possible steps should be taken to strengthen our title to these possessions and various measures to this end were set in train, chief among them being the despatch to carious points in the Dependencies of official parties who have wintered there in each year since 1943. In making their decision, the War Cabinet were influenced to a considerable extent by strategic considerations and in particular by the need of denying to enemy raiders the use of possible refueling bases in the Dependencies in time of war."

decision in direct response to the Argentine encroachments in the Dependencies, although broader strategic reasons – the need to deny to enemy raiders the use of possible re-fuelling bases – also had a considerable influence on the decision. In Churchill’s absence, the War Cabinet took the decision to send a top-secret military expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula in order to establish bases of permanent occupation.³² This decision effectively put to an end the official uncertainty over the future of Britain's South Atlantic territories. For the remainder of the war it would be British official policy actively to safeguard both the Falkland Islands and the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

Following the War Cabinet’s decision to establish bases of effective occupation in Antarctica, British officials in the Colonial Office, the Admiralty and the Foreign Office Research Department (F.O.R.D.) spent the rest of 1943 making preparations for the expedition. These officials, the story goes, became so accustomed to working through the night that the expedition became known as Operation Tabarin, after a famous Parisian nightclub. The Admiralty recalled Lieutenant Commander James Marr from services in the Far East to lead the operation.³³ Marr had previously been to Antarctica as a Boy Scout as part of Shackleton’s final *Quest* expedition and had played a leading role in the inter-war Discovery Investigations. Over the course of the year, Marr put together a small team of men, mostly with previous polar experience, to accompany him to the

³² Later, when he found out about the expedition, Winston Churchill would express his annoyance that the War Cabinet took the decision to send British military personal to such a distant region. Klaus Dodds, “Operation Tabarin” BBC Radio 4, broadcast December 2004.

³³ Interview with Back. SPRI, MS 1308/22/1. Back says that Surgeon Commander Bingham was originally proposed as leader of the expedition, but the Navy would not spare him due to the war.

Antarctic Peninsula. HMS *Bransfield*, a wooden-hulled former sealer, was designated as the vessel of expedition.

At every stage of planning and organization, the top-secret nature of Operation Tabarin was maintained. The main reason for this secrecy was to prevent the Argentine and Chilean Governments from hearing about the expedition and sending their own ships to Antarctica to confront the British.³⁴ Even if Argentina and Chile were rivals in Antarctica, Argentina in particular remained an important commercial ally and source of food. The Foreign Office repeatedly stressed that Britain could not afford an armed showdown with either South American country in Antarctica, since this would jeopardize the food supply. In this way the broader inter-relationships of the Anglo-Argentine-Chilean triangle influenced the development of the sovereignty dispute in Antarctica. In particular, the need to maintain commercial connections gave the dispute a particularly constrained and performative character in which a fierce rhetoric often diverged from a more benign reality.

The overlap of formal and informal empire helped to create the conditions whereby the contest for environmental authority would come to the center of the Antarctica sovereignty dispute. As the three countries attempted to prove their sovereignty rights without an outright display of physical force, the demonstration of superior scientific capabilities offered a convenient way to do this. A major influence on this process was the fact that most Antarctic experts, especially in Britain, were scientists. As the British officials looked for advice about Operation

³⁴ Another reason for this secrecy was the war. There is, however, no evidence to support the view advanced by one author that Operation Tabarin was merely an elaborate hoax to confuse German intelligence. Quoted in Dodds, "Operation Tabarin" Radio 4, broadcast December 2004.

Tabarin, they turned to polar scientists. J.M. Wordie, Master of St John's College, Cambridge and a preeminent polar scientist, played a major role in planning the expedition, and he proved to be quite outspoken.³⁵ The involvement of Wordie and other scientists in the Antarctic problem ensured that British interest towards the region continued to have an important scientific component. Despite the pressures of the war, these scientists saw Operation Tabarin as offering a still rare opportunity to conduct scientific research. As a consequence, Operation Tabarin would have a much greater scientific component than most wartime naval expeditions, and this connection between Antarctic politics and Antarctic science would set the tone for much of the ensuing Antarctic sovereignty dispute.

BRITAIN IN ANTARCTICA

Operation Tabarin arrived in Antarctica in early 1944.³⁶ The members of the top-secret expedition initially attempted to build a base at Hope Bay, on the mainland of the Antarctica Peninsula, but adverse weather conditions prevented this. Instead they established two bases, one at Port Lockroy (Base A), just off the Antarctic Peninsula, and another at Deception Island (Base B) in the South Shetlands.³⁷ At Deception Island the party used the whaling buildings that had not been destroyed by the *Queen of Bermuda* in 1941. At Port Lockroy the party built a base using prefabricated huts. In performing the legal requirement of effective

³⁵ Dominion Office Minute, 3 November 1943. TNA DO 35/890/10.

³⁶ For a summary of the subsequent history of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey and the British Antarctic Survey, see Vivian Fuchs, *Of ice and men: the story of the British Antarctic Survey, 1943-73* (Oswestry, Shropshire, England, 1982).

³⁷ During the winter, when the sea was frozen, it was possible to walk from Port Lockroy to the mainland. However, officials at the time thought that because Port Lockroy was an island it had a little less legal value in demonstrating the effective occupation of the Antarctic Peninsula.

occupation, the governor of the Falkland Islands appointed Captain Marr as Magistrate, Post Master, and Harbor Master of Port Lockroy, and gave the leader at Deception Island similar responsibilities.³⁸ In response to the establishment of an Argentine post office on Laurie Island the previous year, the British issued a set of stamps for the Dependencies, which proved to be popular with stamp collectors.³⁹

At the end of the polar summer, when the season for sending ships to Antarctica had closed, the British announced that they had established two bases of effective occupation in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. By this time it was too late for the Chileans and Argentines to respond with an expedition of their own that season. The reaction to Operation Tabarin in Chile and Argentina was generally muted. Since neither government could immediately do anything about the British action, neither government wanted to highlight its own weakness. In a handwritten memo in the Chilean Foreign Ministry, Julio Escudero wrote despondently that it now looked like the British were serious about upholding their claims to Antarctica, adding that the scientific component of the expedition showed that the British were prospecting for economic opportunities in the region.⁴⁰

Over the course of the polar winter, the parties at the two bases conducted rudimentary meteorological, biological, glaciological and geological research and began the important geo-political tasks of exploration and mapping.⁴¹ N.A. Mackintosh, head of the Discovery Committee, wrote that the object of the work was “to fill in part of the general picture of the Dependencies and to provide a

³⁸ BAS Oral History interviews.

³⁹ Beck, "British Antarctic Policy in the Early Twentieth Century."

⁴⁰ Handwritten Memo (Escudero), 16 October 1944. RR.EE. Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones con Gran Bretaña, 1940-47.

⁴¹ Dodds, *Pink ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire*.

comparison with other regions.”⁴² But, as Marr noted in a letter to the Governor of the Falkland Islands, there was always a political motive behind the scientific work being carried out: “Back [the meteorologist] is intensely interested in weather, and the faithful records he has kept, apart from their scientific value, will strengthen our political position...”⁴³ Back took six meteorological readings a day and broadcast them to Stanley, from where they were included in the International Register. At Deception Island Mr. Flett conducted a geological survey of the island.⁴⁴ At Port Lockroy Ivan Lamb, a botanist and the only trained scientist on the expedition, conducted detailed research into Antarctic lichen.⁴⁵ In a sign of the British parties’ inexperience of polar conditions, the dogs at Port Lockroy were allowed to run free for the first six weeks, killing penguins and disappearing into the interior.⁴⁶

In October 1944 the British government announced their intention of sending a second expedition to Antarctica.⁴⁷ This expedition, the Chileans believed, would include experts in the development of “radiolocación” (radar) from the Battle of Britain in an effort to develop the Antarctic whaling industry, to establish radar stations, and, somewhat surprisingly, to assist with the exploitation of minerals.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Marr to Cardinall, 6 November 1944. SPRI, MS 1308/22/1.

⁴⁴ Another geologist, Mr. Buck, had intended to accompany the expedition, but while still on the *Bransfield* he decided that he was not healthy enough to head south.

⁴⁵ Lamb has been described as the Edward Wilson of the expedition. See BAS Back interview.

⁴⁶ These lessons were not immediately learned. During the construction of Hope Bay in the following summer Andrew Taylor reported that: “The dogs are quite friendly to meet, but anything they fall upon is torn limb from limb in just a few seconds. Dead penguins are scattered all along the beach. They do not eat them, they only kill”. Official Journal of Operation Tabarin as kept by Capt. Andrew Taylor, R.C.E., entry for 8 February 1945. BAS, AD 6/1D/1945/B1

⁴⁷ Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Santiago al Señor Ministro de Defensa Nacional, Subsecretaria de Marina. 25 October 1944. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones con Gran Bretaña, 1940-47.”

In the austral summer of 1944-45 the *Eagle*, *Scoresby*, and *Fitzroy* sailed south from the Falkland Islands and Operation Tabarin constructed two new bases, one at Hope Bay (Base D), and one at Sandefjord Bay (Base C). The building of the Hope Bay base at the far north of the Antarctic Peninsula completed the aborted plan of the previous year, and fulfilled the legal objective of physically occupying the actual Antarctic Continent. The members of Operation Tabarin, with a year's experience of polar conditions, had meticulously planned the unloading of material in advance, making the construction of the new bases go much more smoothly. During the construction of Hope Bay, Captain Marr, the leader of Operation Tabarin, had to be evacuated to the Falkland Islands after a mental breakdown.⁴⁸ He was replaced as leader by his second in command, Captain Andrew Taylor, who had previous experience of surveying in the Canadian Arctic. It was Taylor who oversaw the building of Hope Bay.⁴⁹ Towards the end of the short summer season there was some debate over whether an attempt should be made to establish a base at Stonington Island to the south of the Peninsula. After some discussion the British decided not to make such an attempt. They also decided that there were not enough men to occupy the newly constructed base at Sandefjord Bay.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ He informed Taylor and Flett of his decision to leave on 7 February 1945, and then collapsed the following day. Official Journal of Operation Tabarin as kept by Capt. Andrew Taylor, R.C.E., entry for 7 and 8 February 1945. BAS, AD6/1D/1945/B1.

⁴⁹ One of Taylor's tasks during the building of Hope Bay had been to survey an old hut, which had been left behind by the shipwrecked Nordenskjold expedition of 1902. Members of the expedition had wintered at Hope Bay, living off penguin meat, before marching to rejoin the rest of their party at Snow Hill where they were rescued by the Argentine *Uruguay* expedition.

⁵⁰ See M.A. Martin and J. Rae, "Research Stations and Refuges of the British Antarctic Survey and its Predecessors", (British Antarctic Survey Archives, 2001). The hut was last seen standing on September 6 1950, and by 1955 it had collapsed (possibly blown down).

THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Throughout 1945 the members of Operation Tabarin continued their programs of scientific research and exploration in the relative security of Britain's Falkland Islands Dependencies. Away from Antarctica, truly momentous events were occurring that would shape the future of the Anglo-Argentine-Chilean sovereignty dispute. With Allied forces advancing on Berlin from all sides, Chile and Argentina finally declared war on the Axis Powers.⁵¹ A large part of this decision was based on their desire to take part in the formation of the United Nations and participate in post-war reconstruction. On 28 March 1945 *The Standard* of Buenos Aires, one of two English language newspapers serving the English speaking community in Argentina, happily greeted the news that Argentina had declared war on the Axis: "To say that we are gratified at the decision reached would be to understate the case. We are delighted..."⁵² Between April and June ministers from Argentina and Chile joined ministers from the other Allied countries at the United Nations conference in San Francisco.⁵³ On 7 May 1945 Germany surrendered unconditionally; three months later, Japan would also surrender.⁵⁴

In July 1945 Clement Attlee's Labour Party won a general election in Great Britain. The promise of a "land of milk and honey" to a war weary nation proved

⁵¹ A year earlier both countries had broken off relations with the Axis powers. See Humphreys, *Latin America and the Second World War*.

⁵² *The Standard* 28 March 1945. "Argentina at War."

⁵³ The United Nations would later provide an important arena for discussion of the "Antarctic Problem."

⁵⁴ In the terms of the subsequent peace treaties both defeated nations would be forced to give up their claims to Antarctica. In the case of Germany, this renunciation of claims to Antarctica put an end to Germany activity in the Southern Continent for over 25 years. In 1981 West Germany was admitted to the Antarctic Treaty system as a consultative member. Although Japan would not renew its tentative sovereignty claims to Antarctica, it did resume whaling in Antarctic waters shortly after the end of the war.

enough to defeat Churchill's Tories. With the Labour Party now in government, British officials began planning for the post-war continuation of Operation Tabarin and the effective occupation of the Falkland Islands Dependencies. In May the Foreign Office had prepared a confidential 300 page handbook by Brian Roberts, titled "Territorial Claims in the Antarctic", which summarized the legal, political, and logistical issues surrounding the question of sovereignty.⁵⁵ In responding to this handbook, Wordie suggested that it was in Britain's best interest to avoid an international conference on the question of Antarctic sovereignty, although he warned that the United Kingdom should be prepared for other countries to suggest this.⁵⁶ He added that "even if the United States were not behind the Argentine and Chile, the moves of these two countries would not be unwelcome to the United States; a revival of US claims was to be anticipated and it was likely that the United States would wish to take a hand in the Antarctic whaling after the war." Foreshadowing future interdepartmental rivalry, Wordie recommended that the Dominion Office should immediately reconstitute the Polar Committee, warning that it would be difficult to do so after the Foreign Office had established its own Antarctic Committee.

On 17 July 1945 Operation Tabarin was renamed Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey. The Colonial Office took over full responsibility from the Admiralty. The Colonial Office named Surgeon Commander Bingham leader of the expedition, and set about recruiting 30 men to staff the bases.⁵⁷ This raised the question of publicity for the expedition. Acknowledging the continued sensitivity of

⁵⁵ Document remained closed in the TNA during research.

⁵⁶ Wordie Memo, 14 February 1945. TNA, DO 35/1424.

⁵⁷ Perowne (FO) to Barton (CO), 25 July 1945. TNA, CO 78/217/14.

the issue, the Foreign Office wanted to keep the location of the bases secret, and they determined to warn Sir David Kelly, in Buenos Aires, of all actions concerning Antarctica. On 12 October 1945 Bingham received his instructions to “establish new bases in the South Orkney Islands (C) and in Marguerite Bay (E).”⁵⁸ The establishment of a base at Laurie Island was the most important objective, since it demonstrated British title to the South Orkney Islands, and made it unnecessary to make a formal visit of protest to the Argentine Base at Scotia Bay. The instructions to Bingham stated that the British base should be located far enough away from the Argentine base to “preclude chance meetings between the two parties”. Occasional social visits were allowed, although Bingham was informed “You should not enter into any discussion concerning sovereignty with the Argentine Party.”

The Colonial Office informed Bingham that the Falklands Islands Dependencies Survey should continue the scientific work that had been begun by Operation Tabarin: “apart from political objects, the purpose of the FIDS is to acquire knowledge of the topography, geological structure, glaciers, weather conditions, living, traveling, and navigating conditions, fauna and flora, and natural resources of the FID, more especially of Graham Land and the adjacent islands.”⁵⁹ “Such knowledge”, the instructions continued, “is needed for the future development not only of the Dependencies but also of other Antarctic regions, and it has an important bearing on the general meteorology (and to some extent the oceanography) of the Southern Ocean.” Survey work, although “not fundamentally more important than other work,” was to be given priority, especially at Hope Bay. The Falklands

⁵⁸ FIDS: Instructions Issued to Surgeon Commander E.W. Bingham, R.N., October 1945. TNA, CO 78/217/15

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Islands Dependencies Survey scientific work would focus on the geology of the Antarctic Peninsula in the hope that mineral resources might be found. The Colonial Office acknowledged the crucial importance of understanding the Antarctic weather in order to develop these riches.

In November, Dr. N.A. Mackintosh from the Discovery Investigations wrote to Barton at the Colonial Office with further suggestions about the scientific work of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey.⁶⁰ His main suggestion was that the Discovery Investigations and the Survey should be amalgamated into a single service. He strongly supported British claims to the Dependencies and suggested that the region could prove to be tremendously valuable to Great Britain. Building upon the idea of Antarctica as a frozen *El Dorado*, Mackintosh noted that much of the continent remained practically unknown: “little prospecting has yet been carried out, but indications of very rich copper deposits have already been found and the rock formations of one locality offer the possibility of discovering petroleum.” From a political and economic perspective he added: “the Antarctic may also become important in the future for air routes and for strategic purposes.” Underlying this promise of wealth and power, Mackintosh repeatedly stressed the imperatives of scientific research. “The products of the Antarctic whaling industry are worth between £10 and £20m a year” he claimed, “and it is no exaggeration to say that the regulation and maintenance of this industry cannot be achieved without research on whales.” Finally, Mackintosh suggested that the Antarctic region offered the potential to learn more about the world’s weather conditions:

⁶⁰ Mackintosh (Discovery Investigations) to Mr. Barton (CO), 27 November 1945. TNA, CO 78/217/16.

In high southern latitudes the atmosphere is less disturbed by geographical factors than in any other part of the world, and these regions thus offer a laboratory for pure meteorological research of world wide application. The need for observing stations in the Antarctic and Subantarctic is widely recognized, not only for this reason, but also because they are essential to the development of weather forecasting in South Africa, Australia and NZ. Here again the Dependencies occupy a key position.⁶¹

Scientists and politicians had a mutual interest in holding onto Britain's title to the Falkland Islands Dependencies. Scientists provided political and economic justifications for politicians wanting to maintain British sovereignty. In exchange, politicians had the power to promote and fund scientific research. Antarctic science thus developed within a network of political patronage.

RESUMPTION OF WHALING

For most of the Second World War, very little whaling had taken place in the waters around Antarctica.⁶² Early in the war, the British had destroyed oil supplies at Deception Island in order to prevent them falling into enemy hands. The German ship, the *Penguin*, had captured a large part of the Norwegian whaling fleet. The Allies requisitioned almost all other whaling vessels to serve as transport and supply

⁶¹ The South Africans themselves realized the importance of Antarctica to their weather systems. In December 1945, Brian Roberts noted General Smuts' desire to have a South Polar Year (i.e. a large scale co-operative meteorological investigation in the Southern Hemisphere), although he and Brigadier Shonland did not wish to taken any precipitate action and considered November 1947 to be the earliest practical date for starting. Brian Roberts: Note on Discussion with Instr. Capt. J. Fleming of Admiralty Naval Meteorological Service, December 6th 1945. TNA, CO 78/217/16. Roberts added that: "Capt. Fleming is making unofficial enquiries to discover more about the South African plans. He also wishes to investigate the possibilities of providing facilities through the FIDS for training one or two South Africans in Polar technique. At present they have no-one with the necessary experience and this appears to be one of the chief reasons why official support is being held back."

⁶² Tønnessen and Johnsen, *The history of modern whaling*. 472-498.

ships. German U-boats sank many of these, especially while making the treacherous crossing of the North Atlantic. Salvesen, the major British whaling company, lost all of its factory ships and almost all of its catchers.⁶³

More positively for the prospects of the whaling industry, the suspension of most whaling activities for the duration of the war proved to be a reprieve for Antarctic whale populations.⁶⁴ These populations had begun to show worrying signs of decline in the late 1930s, due to chronic over-fishing. Marine biologists at the end of the war were aware of the benign affects of a prolonged period of recovery, and they suggested to their governments that whaling once again offered exciting economic possibilities. Although these marine biologists tended to overstate their case for the revival of whale numbers, they also realized that if the industry were to survive more than a few years, whaling could not be allowed to return to the unregulated free-for-all of the 1930s.

The British Government was particularly keen to resume Antarctic whaling operations. Labour's new postwar "Land of Milk and Honey" was desperately short of food-fats of any sort. Rationing remained in place and the supply of food was a major political issue, as would be demonstrated by the fraught negotiations with Argentina over the continued export of beef to Britain. In many parts of war-ravaged Europe, food shortages were even more acute, and famine was common. Post-war planners in the British government feared that such scarcity might drive Europe into the hands of the Soviet Union. Antarctic whaling appeared to offer a significant untapped source of food oil and meat. The British Government therefore diverted shipbuilding programs to build new whaling factory ships to replace those lost in the

⁶³ Elliot, *A whaling enterprise: Salvesen in the Antarctic*. 47-48.

⁶⁴ Tønnessen and Johnsen, *The history of modern whaling*.

war. During 1945, British shipyards constructed two new factory ships built to modern specifications with the capacity to process whale meat as well as whale oil.⁶⁵ One of the new ships was sold to the British Salvesen Company. The other was sold to Norway, where several factory ships had in fact survived the war. Out of this somewhat eclectic mixture of old and new boats, a joint British-Norwegian expedition was put together to sail south in the 1945-46 Antarctic summer season.

The British-Norwegian expedition of 1945-46 caught a total of 7,381 Blue Whale Units (BWU), which supplied food to thousands of hungry Europeans. Through taxes on the shore based whale stations, this expedition began to increase the revenues raised in the Falkland Islands Dependencies.⁶⁶ The expedition was also significant for the continued co-operation, though sometimes grudging, of the Norwegian whalers with the British Government. Before the Second World War, Norwegian acquiescence with British sovereignty claims – through the purchase of whaling licenses, the payment of whaling taxes, the submission to British legal authority and so forth – had constituted an important recognition of Britain's legal status in the region. This recognition now looked set to continue. Norway, which now had its own claim to Antarctica to the east of Britain's Falkland Islands Dependencies, made no renewed effort to host a polar conference to discuss the question of sovereignty.

The resumption of whaling posed a problem for whalers, government officials, and scientists: how could they avoid a return to the *laissez-faire* situation of the 1930s and prevent another rapid decline of Antarctica's whale populations? In a

⁶⁵ Elliot, *A whaling enterprise: Salvesen in the Antarctic*. One problem during the 1930s had been that whalers wastefully discarded everything but their valuable whale oil.

⁶⁶ See *Colonial Office Lists* (H.M.S.O. 1939-1959) showing revenue.

pro-active attempt to prevent such a decline from happening, marine biologists and leading figures from the whaling industry met in Washington D.C. in early 1946 to discuss a new regime for global whaling – 90 percent of which took place in the waters around Antarctica. Delegates from 15 countries participated in the conference. Britain's N.A. Mackintosh, from the pre-war Discovery Investigations, was one of the leading figures in the conference.

British participation in the International Whaling Convention (IWC) recalled some of its original justifications for Antarctic Empire: assertions of environmental authority “for the good of humanity.” But now this environmental authority was to be achieved through participation in an international organization, rather than simply through domestic laws regulating the whaling industry. There was also a renewed British concern with economics. In theory, if not always in practice, the mid-twentieth century British Empire had its foundations on the mantra that empire should pay for itself. British taxpayers had traditionally refused to foot the bill for empire, and such an attitude was particularly prevalent within Clement Attlee's new Labour Government. The post war British Empire was seen as a way of reinforcing the British economy, and numerous colonial development schemes, including a scheme for whaling around the Falkland Islands Dependencies, sought to make the Empire more economically productive. In the eyes of many, Britain's claims to Antarctica would not be worth maintaining if they weren't economically self-sufficient.

The advent of factory ship based pelagic whaling during the 1920s had limited the British Government's ability to tax the Antarctic whaling industry. Factory ships on the high seas were out of any nation's jurisdiction. Nevertheless, before the Second World War, the Falkland Islands Dependencies had generated a

profit for the British Empire. Taxes on land-based whaling and the whaling service industry brought in revenue, while expenditure remained minimal.⁶⁷ The renewed interest of Argentina and Chile in the region caused the cost of maintaining British sovereignty in the region to rise greatly. From now on, the British would have to pay for expeditions of effective occupation, and this was not a cheap undertaking in the harsh conditions of the Antarctic environment. Although it would take several years for Britain to put the Falkland Islands Dependencies on a sound financial footing, the renewed whaling industry at least held out the prospect that Britain's presence in Antarctica could be economically self-supporting.

⁶⁷ Expenditure was limited to one or two governmental positions in South Georgia and occasional administrative visits by the Governor of the Falkland Islands.

Chapter 3: The Scramble for Antarctica, 1946-47

During the 1946-47 summer season, an unprecedented “Scramble for Antarctica” took place in the Antarctic Peninsula region. Chile, Argentina, Great Britain, and the United States each sought to put into practice an “effective occupation” of the region through the construction and maintenance of permanent bases. One of the frequently cited legal precedents behind this race for bases was the late nineteenth century scramble for Africa, and the imperialist nature of the contest for Antarctic sovereignty was never far beneath the surface.¹ The *East Greenland Case* of 1933 between Norway and Denmark had reduced the legal requirements for effective occupation of Polar Regions. The ICJ had ruled that the Danes had done enough to demonstrate effective occupation with relatively few permanent bases. When international lawyers transferred this legal precedent to the South Pole, the harshness of the Antarctic environment came to have important legal implications for the politics of the nascent sovereignty dispute.

Despite the growing interest of Argentina and Chile in the question of Antarctica during the Second World War, there was nothing inevitable about the scramble for Antarctica that took place during the 1946-47 season. Continued South American interest in the Antarctic Peninsula region owed as much to the election of nationalist leaning governments in the immediate aftermath of the war as it did to the earlier interest in the region. In many ways it was Chile that took the lead in the post-war Scramble for Antarctica. Frustrated by the country’s wartime inability to send an expedition to Antarctica, the new Government of Gabriel González Videla

¹ Jorge Berguño, “Intellectual Origins of the Antarctic Treaty.” Paper presented to SCAR workshop in history of Antarctic science, Santiago, September 2006.

resolved to establish a Chilean base in *Antártica Chilena*. The embattled president was quick to see the potential for national unification offered by the assertion of Chilean sovereignty in Antarctica. In Argentina, the newly elected and radically different government of Juan Domingo Perón was slower to take up the question of Antarctic sovereignty. But Argentina was unwilling to allow the Chileans to steal the initiative in Antarctic affairs, and the government responded to the Chilean expedition by putting into practice its own plans for the construction of a permanent base. The notion of a South American Antarctica once again found itself strained by the conflicting ambitions of Argentina and Chile.

Renewed and assertive South American interest in the question of Antarctic sovereignty put the British back on the defensive. British politicians and officials remained broadly united by the desire not to set a dangerous precedent in the region that could adversely affect the British position in other parts of the colonial empire.² But there was no agreement on exactly what should be done with the Falkland Islands Dependencies. There were significant differences of opinion between the Colonial Office, which generally wanted to protect Britain's sovereignty in the Antarctic Peninsula region at all costs, and the Foreign Office, which continued to worry more about the preservation of good relations with South America, especially Argentina. Once again, the overlap of formal and informal empire posed a major problem for British Antarctic policy making.

The attitude of the United States continued to complicate the question of Antarctic sovereignty. Rather than supporting any particular claim to the Antarctic

² On a general level British officials continued to think in a similar fashion about the retention of political influence. See, for example, Peter Cain and Tony Hopkins, *British imperialism, 1688-2001*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, 2001).

Peninsula region, officials in Washington pursued their own confused and somewhat indecisive interests in Antarctica. While the US Government continued to dither over whether or not to make a sovereignty claim of its own, it sent an expedition known as Operation Highjump to the Antarctic continent. Under the command of Admiral Byrd, this would be the largest expedition ever to sail to Antarctica. In an effort not to unsettle the precarious situation in the Antarctic Peninsula, Operation Highjump focused its efforts on other parts of the continent. A private US expedition, however, led by Finn Ronne, posed a direct challenge to the three claimant countries by re-occupying the US East Base on Stonington Island in Marguerite Bay, which had been constructed by the Byrd expedition of 1939-1941. Together, these expeditions offered a resounding statement of US interest in Antarctica, although it continued to remain uncertain what form this interest would take.

CHILEAN EXPEDITIONS

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, Chilean politics went through a period of relative instability.³ Despite Chilean neutrality throughout most of the war, the global conflict had severely disrupted the country's economy, as demonstrated by its inability to purchase a ship suitable for sailing to Antarctica. There was a significant demand for political change, especially from the communist leaning left. In the presidential election of 1946, an alliance between the Radical Party and the Communist Party brought about the victory of Gabriel González Videla.⁴ González Videla was a Radical Party politician on the left wing of his

³ Collier and Sater, *A history of Chile, 1808-2002*.

⁴ González Videla, *Memorias*.

party. He was a flamboyant and somewhat unstable figure, and his views did not endear him to the country's right-wing establishment.

The election of Gabriel González Videla with the support of the Communist Party created a feeling that Chile could be heading on a completely new political course. However, the close connections between the Government and the Communist Party worried the United States. Fearing the spread of communism in Latin America, the US State Department, under the influence of the dogmatic Latin American specialist Spruille Braden, was beginning to take a more interventionist approach in the region. When González Videla's government began to talk about land reform, the United States threatened to cut off export credits, which were vital for Chile's economic stability. Without a firm ideological foundation to fall back upon, the new President immediately gave in to US demands. He outlawed the Communist Party, and broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, somewhat ironically accusing the Russians of interference in domestic Chilean politics. Most infamously, these moves led to the forced exile of the poet and Communist Party senator Pablo Neruda, bringing vituperative criticism from communists and socialists throughout the world.⁵

The proscription of the Communist Party left President González Videla in power, but in direct confrontation with one of his principal allies. Amidst the political chaos, the question of Chilean sovereignty in Antarctica offered González Videla one of the few issues that could unite the vast majority of Chileans. To the political left, the President could frame Chile's claims to Antarctica in the language of anti-imperialism: British claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies, he would

⁵ Pablo Neruda, *Confieso que he vivido; memorias*, 1. ed. (Barcelona,, 1974).

argue, represented an outdated vestige of European imperialism on Chilean territory. To the political right, González Videla could appeal to popular patriotic sentiment and the latent fear of Argentina. The simple “fact” that much of the Antarctic Peninsula belonged to Chile became a self-reinforcing justification for the promotion of sovereignty. *Antártica Chilena* offered the President an arena where he could display his nationalist credentials, without too great a risk of immediate repercussions. Over the next few years, González Videla’s political fortunes would become increasingly tied up with the question of Antarctica.⁶

Under the new President, the plans for a Chilean expedition to Antarctica – previously put off every year since 1940 – went ahead at full steam. The Chilean Antarctic Commission continued to present position papers.⁷ Chile acquired two ships from the United States of sufficient strength to withstand Antarctic conditions. These ships were renamed the *Iquique* and the *Angamos*. They would be the first Chilean ships to sail to Antarctica since the *Yelcho* had rescued Ernest Shackleton’s expedition in 1916. Everything was now in place for a Chilean voyage to Antarctica.⁸ Central to the Chilean plans was the establishment of a permanent Antarctic station. The Chileans realized that they were falling behind in the “race for bases,” and the quest to fulfill the legal obligation of effective occupation. Most Chilean officials believed that the best response would be to construct bases of their

⁶ Christie, *The Antarctic problem; an historical and political study*.

⁷ For example, in May 1946, Cordovez circulated a paper entitled “The Province of Magallanes, Antarctica, and Petroleum – A Promising Trinity” in which he argued that foreign companies should not be allowed appropriate Chile’s petroleum wealth. Cordovez al Ministro de RR.EE, 2 May 1946. RR.EE., *Antártica Chilena*, Varios, 1940-48.

⁸ See British protest note of 11 November that explicitly challenged Chile’s “scientific grounds for sovereignty. Bianchi, Londres, a Ministro de RR.EE. 14 November 1946. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones con Gran Bretaña, 1940-47.”

own in the Antarctic Peninsula.⁹ The new base would be named after the national hero of Chile, Bernardo O'Higgins, who had led the independence struggle against the Spanish. His was also the name that the Chileans gave to the entire Peninsula region: Tierra O'Higgins.

On 21 January 1947, on the eve of the departure of the *Angamos* and the *Iquique*, Raúl Juliet, the Chilean Foreign Minister, made an impassioned speech before the Chilean Senate setting out Chile's interests in Antarctica.¹⁰ In his discourse Juliet summarized at length the historical, geographical, juridical, diplomatic, and administrative antecedents to Chile's claim in Antarctica. He then described the Chilean efforts to send an expedition to Antarctica. The Foreign Minister concluded his speech with a summary of the "values which the Chilean sector represents with respect to its riches and possibilities." In a rousing finale to the speech, Juliet exalted the national pride associated with Chile's claims to Antarctica:

The Antarctic territory embraces undoubted wealth and possibilities. But even if there was nothing of value, even if in the Chilean Sector there was not but the cold and desolate prolongation of the fatherland, there would exist on our part the obligation to preserve and defend it, precisely for that reason: that it is the southern part of Chile, an integral part of her soil... I am of those who believe that the national patrimony, whatever may be its importance, must be kept intact as we received it from our fathers, and passed on in the same form to future generations. In this patriotic vigilance the Minister of Foreign Relations is sure that he may count upon the vigor and strength of all Chileans.¹¹

⁹ But others, including Julio Escudero, were already skeptical about Chile's chances of winning such a contest

¹⁰ Address of the Minister of Foreign Relations, Mr. Raúl Juliet Gomez, Before the Chilean Senate, at the Special Session held on 21 January 1947, on the Government's Foreign Policy. RR.EE., "Antártico, 1939-52." Chilean translation.

¹¹ Ibid.

Interestingly, the speech made little of the conflict with Great Britain. Also missing from the speech given to the Senate was a reference to confraternity with Argentina and the possibility of an international conference, which had been crossed out in an earlier draft.

On 15 Jan 1947, the *Iquique* set sail for Antarctica. This was the ship that would do most of the work building Base O'Higgins, and the crew consisted mostly of military personnel from the army and the navy. The *Iquique* sailed directly to Greenwich Island in the South Shetlands, the location identified as the best place for the Chilean base. The island offered the benefits of relatively easy access without the difficulties of producing a direct confrontation with Great Britain or Argentina. After unloading the construction materials, the *Iquique* continued southwards towards Marguerite Bay, south of the Antarctic Circle, where the Byrd's 1939-41 expedition had constructed their East Base, and where the British were currently occupying a base on Stonington Island. At Marguerite Bay the Chileans reported the British met them with "*cordialidad, alegría y amistad*" [cordiality, happiness, and friendship], although they turned down their host's offer to make use of the Royal Mail Post Office. A construction party remained behind at Greenwich Island to build Base O'Higgins, and members of the army's *Instituto Geográfico Militar* began the task of reconnoitering and mapping the surrounding region. The ship then departed northwards, calling at Base O'Higgins and leaving a party of five men under the leadership of Boris Kopic, who would spend the winter at the new base. The over-wintering party would continue to fly the Chilean flag and conducted a rudimentary program of scientific research.

Two weeks after the departure from Chile of the *Iquique*, the *Angamos* set sail from Valparaíso. On board the *Angamos* was a coterie of Chilean officials, journalists, writers, and artists, all eager to participate in and describe the historic expedition. The Chilean Government saw this voyage as an excellent opportunity to give publicity to its Antarctic claims. Such Chilean literary figures and scholars as Francisco Coloane, Enrique Bunster, Eugenio Orrego Vicuña, Oscar Vila Labra, Oscar Pinochet de la Barra, and Miguel Serrano accompanied the Chilean expedition to Antarctica.¹² Some of these men had a direct interest in Antarctica Affairs: Julio Ripamonti Barros, for example, was the architect who designed the Chilean base to be erected in Tierra O'Higgins. Others were scientists, such as Humberto Barreras, Guillermo Mann, Parmenio Yáñez and Carlos Oliver Schneider. There were also journalists and photographers to give publicity to the expedition: Genaro Medina, Pablo Estay, Guy Walrand, Hernán Correa, Pedro Peña y Lillo, and Hans Helfritz. On their voyage south, the officers and scholars on board the *Angamos* discussed the meaning of Antarctica for Chile and for the Chilean race. Antarctica, they agreed, offered Chileans an opportunity to prove their racial fitness.¹³ One particularly fascinating figure on board was the fascist-sympathizing Miguel Serrano, who would later become Chilean ambassador to India. Serrano believed that Ritscher's German *Schwabenland* expedition of 1938-1939 to Queen Maud Land had constructed a secret bunker, to which Hitler had fled by submarine at the end of the war.¹⁴ Upon arrival at the Antarctic Peninsula, the light captivated Serrano, and his poetic enthusiasm spread to the others.

¹² Pinochet de la Barra, *Medio siglo de recuerdos antárticos: memorias*. 60.

¹³ Miguel Serrano, *La Antártica y otros mitos* ([Santiago de Chile], 1948).

¹⁴ According to Serrano, the true reason for the US Operation Highjump was therefore to look for Hitler.

The *Angamos* generally followed the same route as the *Iquique*, and its eclectic crew helped with the construction of Base O'Higgins.¹⁵ The *Angamos* also visited the British base at Stonington Island, taking the opportunity, as the crew of the *Iquique* had done, to look around the abandoned US East Base. These visits to the North American base would later become quite controversial.

Upon their return from Antarctica, the writers and journalists on board the *Angamos* set about publishing accounts of their experiences in *Antártica Chilena*. Rarely in the history of Antarctic exploration have so many participants published accounts of their experiences, especially in so short a time. Collectively, what emerged from these various publications was a distinctively Chilean “vision” of Antarctica that contrasted starkly with the imperial vision of Great Britain. The Chileans who visited Antarctica saw it as part of their national territory. Writers such as Francisco Coloane sought to transplant the myths and legends of southern Chile to the shores of the Antarctic Peninsula, thereby making a folkloric claim to the territory.¹⁶ Chile’s vision of Antarctica tended to bring the continent closer and focus on similarities, whereas the British vision reveled in its distance and its otherness. The literary and poetic focus of Chilean accounts of Antarctica differed greatly from the British tendency to see the continent through a predominantly scientific lens. By refusing to accept science as the only way of “knowing” Antarctica, the Chilean Antarctic vision represented a subtle epistemological challenge to Britain’s imperial justifications of sovereignty through scientific superiority, although this carried little weight outside Chile.

¹⁵ Pinochet de la Barra, *Medio siglo de recuerdos antárticos: memorias*.

¹⁶ Francisco Coloane, *Los conquistadores de la Antártida* (Santiago de Chile, 1945).

ARGENTINE EXPEDITIONS

Postwar Argentina underwent political upheavals even greater than those in Chile. At the center of these upheavals was the ambitious military officer Juan Domingo Perón. Perón had spent much of his youth in Patagonia, and entered the Army's war college in Buenos Aires in his early teens.¹⁷ He graduated to become an experienced Army officer who had held posts as a lecturer in military history, as a military attaché in Chile, in the Andes Mountain Regiment, and, most notoriously, on a mountain warfare training program in Italy between 1939-1940. He had returned to Argentina from Europe in 1940 with a heightened political awareness and a certain respect for the collective mobilization achieved by Italian Fascism and German Nazism. In 1943, through a shadowy military lodge known as the GOU, Colonel Perón participated in the coup that overthrew the *Concordancia* government and established military rule in Argentina.

By 1945 Perón had established himself in the military government of General Farrell and was serving as both Minister for War and Minister for Labor. It was this latter position that enabled Perón to develop a political power-base outside the limited confines of the Argentine military. Despite the dislocations of the Second World War, and its alleged "dependence" on Great Britain, Argentina was a rapidly industrializing country. Factories and businesses sprang up around the edge of Buenos Aires. The urban population swelled as economic migrants moved to the capital to work in the new factories. Economic development was not a painless process and industrial disputes were common. As Minister of Labor, Perón played a pro-active role in adjudicating these disputes. More often than not he came down on

¹⁷ For full biographical details, see Joseph A. Page, *Perón, a biography*, 1st ed. (New York, 1983).

the side of the workers. This earned him a reputation as a champion of the lower classes, a reputation that his relationship with Eva Duarte, “Evita”, a glamorous radio-actress from a lower class background, did much to enhance.

The popularity of Colonel Perón presented a threat to other ambitious members of the military government.¹⁸ In particular, the military establishment looked down with scorn on Perón’s relationship with Evita, which they deemed unsuitable for a military officer and a government minister. In October 1945 various members of the government conspired to have Perón removed from his government positions and placed under arrest. This move caused tremendous resentment among the working classes in and around Buenos Aires, who had come to view Perón as one of the few figures in the government who cared about their interests. On 17 October, a massive march took place in support of the arrested Colonel. The marchers came mainly from the working class districts of Greater Buenos Aires, which surrounded the federal capital. As the marchers convened in Plaza de Mayo, in front of the Presidential Palace, the presence of so many *descamisados* [literally, people without shirts] frightened the more genteel residents of the city center. Worried about the consequence of such a large-scale popular mobilization, the military government released Perón and urged him to pacify the crowd. In a symbolic act of solidarity the Colonel stood before the people and removed his jacket, declaring that he too was a *descamisado*, one of them. With this gesture Perón established a populist reputation that would carry him through the rest of his career. The politics of Argentina would never be the same again.

¹⁸ Felix Luna, *El 45: cronica de un ano decisivo*, 3. ed. (Buenos Aires, 1971).

In February 1946, Argentina held its first fair elections since the late 1920s. Colonel Perón stood as the Labor Party Candidate against José P. Tamborini, of the Democratic Union, a loose alliance of opposition parties.¹⁹ In a shameless attempt to influence the outcome of the election in favor of the Democratic Union, Spruille Braden, the United States Ambassador, published what became known as the “Blue Book”. This small publication contained allegations that the Argentine military government, of which Perón had been a member, had secretly collaborated with Nazi Germany. Braden was an ideologue with a lifetime of experience in Latin America. He personified the United States’ ongoing sense of betrayal at Argentina’s wartime neutrality. He claimed that Colonel Perón was a fascist and openly campaigned during the election on the side of his opponent. However, the North American Ambassador’s attempt at political interference backfired spectacularly. In response to Braden’s allegations, Perón published his own “Blue and White Book” (the colors of Argentina’s flag), and he was able to present himself as the patriotic candidate against US meddling. The enduring slogan of the campaign became “Perón or Braden?”

The election polarized Argentine society as it became very clear that Perón would take Argentina in a direction very different from its traditional course.²⁰ The charismatic colonel promised to end oligarchic rule and return Argentina to its people. The election was hard fought, and up till the very last day the result was too

¹⁹ The *Partido Laborista* supposedly took its name from the British Labour Party, which Perón admired for its defeat of Churchill’s Conservatives in the General Election of 1945. During the Argentine election campaign rumors circulated that the British were backing Perón, partly in an effort to undermine the United States. Hugo Gambini, *Historia del peronismo*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires, 1999).

²⁰ Right up until polling day the *Standard* English language newspaper was still predicting that the Labor Party would lose.

close to call. But as the results drifted in from across the country in the following weeks, it became apparent that Juan Domingo Perón had been elected the next President of Argentina. Although it was by no means clear at the time, the election of President Perón would mark the beginning of the end of the close Anglo-Argentine relationship (See Chapter 4).

In March 1946, the outgoing Farrell Government had reorganized the Argentine Antarctic Commission, which had effectively lain dormant since the military coup of 1943. This reorganization appointed José Manuel Moneta as head of the Commission. Moneta was a meteorologist with vast experience in the South Orkneys. His book, *Four Years in The South Orkneys*, which recounted his life and work at the meteorological station on Laurie Island, had sold well.²¹ However, in the months following his appointment, Moneta received no support from the incoming President for his plans to renew Argentine activities in Antarctica and in September he resigned in protest.²²

With Perón's initial support for Argentine Antarctica at most lukewarm, the Argentine Navy made a decisive intervention in Antarctic affairs. Naval officers urged Atilio Bramuglia, Perón's newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, to put into practice the recommendations of the Antarctic Commission. The enthusiasm of the Navy for Antarctic affairs represented something of a double edged sword for the new President. On the one hand, the assertion of Argentine rights to Antarctica was in keeping with the nationalist policies of the incoming government. On the other hand, the Navy was the Argentine institution most hostile to Perón's new style of

²¹ José Manuel Moneta, *Cuatro años en las Orcadas del sur; narraciones y hechos salientes de las expediciones argentinas*, 2. ed. (Buenos Aires, 1940).

²² Comisión Nacional del Antártico. Expediente 44. Año 1953. "Antecedentes sobre la Comisión Nacional del Antártico." MREYC, Organismos Internacionales Paquete 15.

populist politics. In keeping with his broader policy of giving the armed forces a loose rein, the President acceded to the Navy's demands for greater Argentine involvement in Antarctica.²³

The appointment of Pascal La Rosa, from the Foreign Ministry, as head of the Argentine Antarctic Commission offered a new start. The Commission began to receive full government support, and it instituted a series of legislation. In October 1946, the Chilean Embassy in Buenos Aires reported an Argentine decree prohibiting the publication of any maps that did not include the full extension of Argentine sovereignty, including the South Atlantic Islands and Antarctica: all maps had to be approved by the *Instituto Geográfico Militar*.²⁴ On 8 November 1946, the Antarctic Commission, with the full backing of the Navy, sent Bramuglia a plan for an Argentine expedition to Antarctica in the upcoming Antarctica season.²⁵

The stimulus for adopting the plan, however, came largely from the outside. On 21 November 1946, the Chilean Ambassador in Buenos Aires handed a note to Bramuglia, inviting three Argentine officials to accompany a Chilean expedition to Antarctica that would sail in February 1947.²⁶ This invitation represented the fulfillment of the promise that the Chilean government had first made in 1942. Rather than simply accepting the invitation, the Argentine Government decided to go ahead and send its own expedition to Antarctica. Two weeks later, the Argentine

²³ See, Robert A. Potash, *The army & politics in Argentina* (Stanford, Calif., 1969).

²⁴ Embajada de Chile en Buenos Aires al Ministro de RR.EE., 22 October 1946. "Nuevas normas para la publicación de mapas de Argentina." RR.EE., Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.

²⁵ Enrique Jorge Pierrou, *La Armada Argentina en la Antártida* (Buenos Aires, República Argentina, 1981). 88.

²⁶ Embajada Chilena en BA al Ministerio RR.EE. "Viaje de una fragata de la Armada Nacional al Territorio Chileno Antártico e invitación a una Delegación de la Marina Argentina." 5 December 1946. RR.EE., Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.

Minister of Foreign Relations and Worship informed the Chilean representative that Argentina also had an expedition planned for the upcoming austral summer on board the *Patagonia*. The Minister added that his government was preparing an invitation to the Government of Chile inviting one Chilean naval officer, of a rank no higher than lieutenant, to accompany the Argentines. This naval official would have to prepare quickly, since the Argentine expedition was leaving Buenos Aires on the 10 December, only five days from when the invitation was issued.

BRITISH EXPEDITIONS

Unlike in Chile and Argentina, where the promotion of sovereignty in Antarctica was becoming a significant political issue, in post-war Britain the question of the Falkland Islands Dependencies remained relatively peripheral. Attlee's Labour Government had to deal with pressing issues throughout the colonial empire, and had little time to devote exclusively to the escalating "Antarctic Problem." As a consequence, it was British government officials, rather than British government ministers, who did much of the day-to-day decision-making regarding Antarctica.²⁷ The Antarctic problem continued to be complicated by the overlap of formal and informal empire. A strong line in the Falkland Islands Dependencies threatened to undermine the remaining goodwill between Britain and Latin America. This problem continued to reflect significant differences of opinion between the Foreign Office, which generally advocated a softer approach, and the Colonial Office, which tended to demand a hard line.

²⁷ Britain's policy towards the Antarctic continued to be set by the 1943 Cabinet decision to protect British interests in the Falkland Islands Dependencies,

In contrast to Foreign Office appeals for restraint, officials from the Colonial Office tended to see the Antarctic problem through strategic, economic, and moralistic lenses. Not only, they argued, might the region become crucial for communications in any Third World War, but also the cession of the Falkland Islands Dependencies in the face of South American pressure would set a terrible precedent for the rest of the colonial empire. The Colonial Office position was underwritten economically by the continued profitability of the Antarctic whaling industry and the belief that valuable mineral deposits might be found in Antarctica. This was an argument that could be used to forestall talk of giving away any part of the Dependencies: it would be foolish, Colonial Office officials argued, to hand over territories that could, in the future, prove to contain valuable mineral resources. In general, the Admiralty supported the Colonial Office position, and refused to contemplate any concessions in Antarctica. However, this support was less forthright than it had been during the Second World War, when the Admiralty had funded Operation Tabarin. Admiralty officials were less convinced of the strategic and economic potential of Antarctica, and they worried about the possibility of their ships getting stuck in the ice. The Tory Opposition, meanwhile, were bullish in their support for the Falkland Islands Dependencies, and Conservative M.P.s periodically raised questions in the House of Commons asking why the Government was not doing more to protect British territory in the Antarctic.

Sir Miles Clifford, the newly appointed Governor of the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies, personified the Colonial Office's attitude towards Antarctica. "Ginger George," as Clifford was widely known, was an imposing figure who had spent his entire career in the Colonial Service, mostly in West Africa. Schooled in the economic *quid pro quo* of empire, Clifford was a pragmatist rather than an

idealist. The conflict in the Antarctic Peninsula region offered the new Governor an exciting arena to demonstrate his talent, in what was otherwise a notoriously dull posting. As the “man on the spot,” Clifford was able to exercise a disproportionate influence over the course of the sovereignty dispute, and his unwavering commitment to British sovereignty would help to ensure that few concessions were made. He passionately disliked the South American incursions into “British Territory,” and at one point would suggest the use of ice-cold water to deter Argentine landings at Admiralty Bay:

A hosepipe – the water is very cold and would be most discouraging – could scarcely be construed as “armed force”? It might be necessary to use it and I think it very unlikely that we should have to use anything else.²⁸

Although such a recourse was never taken, it revealed his commitment to the cause of the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

After the British had taken the initiative in Antarctic Affairs with the dispatch of Operation Tabarin in 1944, the Chilean and Argentine expeditions of 1946-47 threw them back onto the defensive. The British Government responded to the South American challenge by issuing strongly worded protest notes to the Governments in Santiago and Buenos Aires, which, unlike in 1941-42, were delivered in a timely fashion by the respective ambassadors. But apart from these gestures, Britain did nothing to prevent Chile and Argentina from establishing their

²⁸ Miles Clifford to Mediterranean Department, 18 August 1948. TNA, CO 537/4010. The Secretary of State for the Colonies later wrote to the Governor of the Falkland Islands in order to curb his enthusiasm: “I do not consider that such a measure would be advisable unless we were prepared to back the use of force to the limit, and I regret that I am not prepared to approve it.” From the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Officer Administering the Government of Falkland Islands. 4 November 1948. TNA, CO 537/4010.

own bases of effective occupation. During the 1946-1947 season, the British continued with the work of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, but there was no real expansion of the program. The main reason for this somewhat lackluster response was the Foreign Office's fear of upsetting the two South American countries, although it was also due to strategic over-stretch and scarcity of financial resources.

Amidst the disagreements between the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office, scientific research in Antarctica offered an activity that could keep almost all British officials happy. For the Colonial Office scientific research helped to fulfill the legal requirement of effective occupation. Science also provided useful information that could help in the practical task of out-maneuvering the Argentines and Chileans in the Dependencies through the production of maps, charts, and weather forecasts. For the Foreign Office, science offered a non-confrontational way to maintain a British presence in the region without directly or physically challenging Argentina or Chile. This drew on traditional notions of science as an internationalist activity. Scientific research also promised to reveal the true economic value of the Falkland Islands Dependencies, showing which parts, if any, were economically useless and therefore suitable to give up. This aspect could also appeal to officials in the Treasury, who kept a watchful eye on the costs involved in maintaining British sovereignty. In a demonstration of the political importance of science, the British government established a "FIDS Scientific Committee" to coordinate and disseminate British Antarctic research.

Early in the dispute, the British realized the particular importance of Antarctic meteorology. Meteorological readings from the five British bases were relatively easy to take, and they produced knowledge that was scientifically

interesting and potentially useful. In no uncertain terms, Brian Roberts, of the Foreign Office Research Department (FORD), explained the political importance of “pure” Antarctic science to Gordon Howkins, the Falkland Islands’ newly appointed meteorological officer:

An active programme of research, which can be justified on scientific grounds alone, is an essential part of the preparation of a case which can be used if necessary to demonstrate to Foreign Governments of a Tribunal that HMG is taking all reasonable steps to develop and exercise sovereignty over the area, and is not merely attempting to prevent foreign encroachments. There is no doubt that both the Chilean and Argentine Governments would like to set up meteorological stations in the Dependencies for political reasons. It is essential therefore that while we have to exclude them from doing so we must take every possible step to ensure that we do not lay ourselves open to the same charge. Whilst FIDS was political in origin, it is important to maintain it as far as possible as a normal administrative activity in which motives of research, exploration and development predominate.²⁹

The conduct of “better science” continued to provide the British with a justification for its imperial claims in the Antarctic Peninsula region. Roberts went on to explain that in all but two bases scientific considerations dictated the conduct of meteorological research.

Alongside the increasing focus on meteorology, the British continued the general work of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey during the 1946-47 season. Parties at the five existing bases carried out mapping and surveying work, geology, and biology. In London, the Colonial Secretary continued to hold onto the belief that valuable minerals might be found, passing on instructions that, “in the

²⁹ Notes on a Conversation between Dr. B.B. Roberts (Foreign Office Research Department) and Mr. Howkins. Secret. 13 September, 1946. FIA, No. 255/46 “Main Natural History – Meteorological Records. Taking Over of the Falkland Islands Meteorological Station by Air Ministry (Establishment of a New Met Station).”

event of visits by members of other parties care should be taken to secrete any evidence, and specimens, of any minerals of commercial significance.”³⁰ However, in reality the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey remained somewhat disorganized. From Stanley, a member of the Survey wrote a letter to the Colonial Office criticizing the chaotic organization of the British Antarctic Expedition of 1946/47: “Everyday whilst I am in Stanley, I see and hear something new which is not to the credit of the organization of the FIDS. One efficient man in London, doing nothing else, and another of the same caliber down here in Stanley, would make a success of what has been, at least for some of us, an unhappy experience.”³¹ This reveals something of the amateur “make-do-and-mend” mentality of the British in Antarctica in this immediate post-war period.

UNITED STATES’ EXPEDITIONS

In the United States, just as in Great Britain, the Antarctic Problem was relatively low down on the list of post-war priorities. President Truman, who had taken office following the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt in April 1945, faced pressing problems at home and throughout the world. Uncertainty and indecision continued to characterize Washington’s Antarctic policy.³² The official position continued to be defined by the Hughes doctrine of 1924, which stated that the United States refused to recognize any claims to Antarctica, while reserving the right to make future claims of its own to any part of the continent. However, the growing interest of Argentina and Chile in the sovereignty of the Antarctic Peninsula,

³⁰ Secretary of State for Colonies to Falkland Islands (Clifford), 20 January 1947. TNA, CO 537/4010.

³¹ Dougal to Colonial Office, 20 January 1947. TNA, CO 78/225/2.

³² Klotz, *America on the ice: Antarctic policy issues*.

combined with the British Empire's stubborn refusal to make concessions, put pressure on the Truman Administration to take a more decisive stance. If the United States did nothing in Antarctica, some officials feared, it would lose the historic rights accumulated by the expeditions of Admiral Byrd and others. At the same time the involvement of three of its allies in a potentially hostile dispute threatened to destabilize the region, and made the question of US involvement all the more sensitive. Indirectly, the Antarctic sovereignty dispute between Great Britain, Chile, and Argentina was one of the principal factors shaping the United States' post-war policy in Antarctica. Fear of being seen to take sides helps to explain the indecisiveness at the heart of the US position.

Despite its indecision on the question of making a claim, the US Government decided to send a large-scale expedition to the Antarctic Continent in the austral summer of 1946-47. Operation Highjump, as the expedition became known, would be the largest expedition ever to sail to Antarctica. The expedition had several objectives. Firstly, and most obviously, it would boost the US presence in the continent and reinforce the country's "historic rights" to Antarctic sovereignty. Secondly, by keeping a large number of servicemen in operation, the expedition would help to ease the domestic problem caused by post-war demobilization. Thirdly, an Antarctic expedition offered excellent opportunities for large scale, cold weather training. Even in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, a confrontation with the Soviet Union was becoming a distinct possibility. Such a confrontation would likely take place, at least in part, in and around the Arctic Circle. An expedition to Antarctica offered a relatively unthreatening way to train armed forces for such a showdown in similar environmental conditions. Finally,

Operation Highjump offered US policy makers an opportunity to assess the economic possibilities of Antarctica.

The US Navy took command of Operation Highjump, with Admiral Byrd placed in overall control. The name came from the prevalence of ship launched aircraft. The expedition focused its attentions on the vast, apparently continental, regions of East and West Antarctica, which remained almost entirely unexplored. This focus prevented a direct challenge to the claims of Great Britain, Argentina, and Chile in the Antarctic Peninsula region, although some survey work was done in the contested area. Operation Highjump was by far the largest single expedition ever to sail to Antarctica. In terms of sheer scale, its 13 ships and 3000 men in fact eclipsed all previous scientific expeditions to Antarctica put together. The US Government made no attempt to keep the expedition secret, and Operation Highjump received publicity throughout the world. If the pre-war expeditions of Admiral Byrd had given a foretaste of North American pretensions to “dominion over nature” in Antarctica, then Operation Highjump was a clear statement that the United States had replaced Britain as the leading technological and scientific power in the Southern Continent.

In keeping with the widespread fantasies of Antarctica as a frozen *El Dorado* – many of them generated by Admiral Byrd himself – United States scientists connected to Operation Highjump set out to assess the economic and strategic potential of the southern continent. Scientists often felt they were treated like second-class citizens, since military training was clearly the operational priority of the expedition. Nevertheless, the scientific work of the expedition was very important, as much for its negative results as for any positive findings. If there were riches to be found amidst the Antarctic ice, the US government fully expected

Operation Highjump to find conclusive evidence of their existence. A number of leading geologists such as Lawrence Gould sailed with the expedition and conducted extensive prospecting. The aerial survey work of the expedition – although in some ways flawed by its lack of fixed points on the ground – also assisted in the quest for geological information.³³ Apart from a few isolated discoveries, the scientists found little to suggest that Antarctica really was an untapped treasure trove. This failure to discover economically exploitable minerals undoubtedly had an impact on US Government policy: had valuable mineral deposits been found the subsequent US position would almost certainly have been very different. Even Admiral Byrd, previously a great believer in US sovereignty in Antarctica, began to stress the desirability for some sort of international regime.

In some ways the private expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula led by Finn Ronne represented a greater threat to the territorial pretensions of Britain, Argentina, and Chile, than did Operation Highjump. Ronne's expedition had the official backing of the American Philosophical Society and the tacit backing of the US government. Its plan was to re-occupy the US East Base at Marguerite Bay evacuated so rapidly by Commander Black in 1941. The "private expedition" status allowed the United States government to challenge the rival territorial claimants in Antarctica without doing so explicitly. One year earlier, in the 1945-46 season, Great Britain had established a base at Marguerite Bay, literally right alongside the evacuated US hut. Foreign Office officials expressed that they were "not entirely easy as regards Finn Ronne's intentions" and they did what they could to dissuade

³³ George Dufek revealed that not enough grounding points had been taken during Operation Highjump to facilitate reliable mapping. See George John Dufek, *Operation Deepfreeze*, [1st ed. (New York, 1957).

the Americans from re-establishing themselves at Marguerite Bay, but these efforts proved unsuccessful.³⁴ The close proximity of the two bases would provide a fascinating microcosm of Anglo-American relations. The already tense relationship was complicated by the presence of two women on the American expedition: Edith Ronne and Jennie Darlington. The two women, both accompanying their husbands, would become the first women to spend a winter in Antarctica.

Finn Ronne invited a Chilean official to accompany his expedition. The Chilean government had to refuse this offer because the price demanded by the North American, \$360,000 pesos (US\$20,000) was too expensive, given the costs already incurred of sending a Chilean expedition to Antarctica.³⁵ Ronne's intentions to associate Chileans with his expedition made the British Foreign Office even more uneasy.³⁶ The State Department denied that Ronne had applied for a Chilean visa to "visit the Chilean Antarctic."³⁷

From an international perspective, Finn Ronne's plans for an expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula region were not universally popular. In particular, the British did not want a US presence, whether "official" or otherwise, in such close proximity to their base at Stonington Island, especially given Ronne's fraternizing with the South Americans. In their attempt to dissuade Finn Ronne from

³⁴ Foreign Office to British Embassy, Washington, 3 January 1947, Instructions to approach the State Department with reference to Finn Ronne's expedition. SPRI, MS1278. The Foreign Office noted that "It is within our knowledge that in 1940 he left claim sheets at two places at least and that a third claim was deposited by his supporting party within our territory; see page 166 of print secret (16839). He boasted that this was done with the approval of the State Department."

³⁵ Ministro de Defensa Nacional a Ministro de RR.EE., Santiago 6 January 1947 RR.EE., "Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49."

³⁶ Foreign Office to British Embassy, Washington. 8 January 1947. "Further Worries about Ronne's expedition." SPRI, MS 1278.

³⁷ Cumming to Hadow, "State Department's reply to Hadow's letter of the 9 January," 23 January 1947. SPRI, MS 1278.

establishing his party at Marguerite Bay, the British fell back upon environmental rhetoric and the idea of scientific supremacy. Two expeditions, the British asserted, tacitly proclaiming the superiority of their Antarctic knowledge, would be environmentally unsustainable, due to the scarcity of seals.³⁸

1946-47: THE MARGUERITE BAY ROBBERY

Upon Ronne's arrival at Marguerite Bay, Pierce Butler, the new British leader of the Stonington Island Base, welcomed him and offered any assistance within his power.³⁹ Pierce Butler went on to surprise the newly arrived North American party with the statement that Miles Clifford, the Governor of the Falkland Islands: "deplores acts of hooliganism against American property by Chilean gangsters which we did our best to prevent." Ronne soon saw for himself the extent to which the American base appeared to have been ransacked in the years since Commander Black had left so hurriedly in 1941. Rather than believing the British stories about the Chilean intruders, the Americans initially blamed the British for the equipment losses. For a while the atmosphere at Marguerite Bay was incredibly tense. The situation worsened when the US party attempted to raise an American flag. Ronne went as far as writing directly to President Truman to complain about the presence of British intruders on US territory and the destruction of US property for which the British or others were possibly responsible.⁴⁰ The conflict also came out in Ronne's frequent reports for the *New York Times*.

³⁸ Wordie, for example, argued that there were not enough seals to feed the dogs of two different parties.

³⁹ Pierce Butler to Ronne, "Welcome Note to Marguerite Bay", 16 March 1947. SPRI, MS1278.

⁴⁰ Foreign Office to British Embassy, Washington. 19 March 1947. SPRI, MS1278.

The British, however, persisted with their accusations against the Chileans. From the Foreign Office, Perowne wrote a letter to Barton at the Colonial Office suggesting that “In view of the recent loss at the hands of the Chileans of the rest of the US stores at Marguerite Bay, it would, we imagine, be much appreciated by the Americans and perhaps help local relations if we are able to replace at least a part of the aviation fuel used by our party there.”⁴¹

The Chileans first heard of their supposed looting of the American base from the French Press Agency on 20 March 1947.⁴² The Director of the French news agency told the Chilean Defense Ministry that the British were about to send the Chileans a protest note concerning the actions of their two ships. The first “raid” had been by the *Iquique* on 20 February and the second had been by the *Angamos* on the 8 March. Major Pierce Butler reported that Chilean officials did not intervene when the men entered and “sacked” the American base. At the Foreign Office, Perowne urged caution, since “a full dress protest to the Chileans will be necessary regarding their general and more important violations of our sovereignty in the Antarctic.”⁴³ The head of the American division at the Foreign Office wanted to know the extent of Chilean “wickedness” in British Antarctic possessions before any formal protest was made. Perowne concluded:

⁴¹ Perowne (FO) to Barton (CO), 13 March 1947, SPRI, MS1278. In April 1947, the FIDS committee (Roberts, Barton, Wordie, Stirling, and Lloyd) met to discuss instructions for a modus vivendi for Pierce Butler at Stonington Island. FIDS Committee to Clifford, 16 April 1947. SPRI, MS1278. Their suggestions included that the Americans and the British should be assigned specific areas to be investigated. They also thought that a “full exchange of meteorological data is highly desirable.” With the Americans living alongside the British at Stonington Island, the initial assertion that the area would not be able to support two parties was quickly forgotten.

⁴² Ministro de Defensa Nacional al Ministro de RR.EE. Santiago 20 de Marzo de 1947. RR.EE, “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

⁴³ Perowne Minutes, Discussion of Chilean “hooliganism” at Stonington Island, 21 March 1947. SPRI, MS1278.

...we must not lose sight of the fact that it is the Chilean word against the word of our FIDS party and that it appears from its own confessions that the party has been much more liberal in helping itself to US equipment at Stonington than we hitherto dreamed of, and has now been accused of smoking cigarettes and consuming other goods from the US base by the Chileans.

In the meantime, the Governor of the Falkland Islands resolved to get signed affidavits from the Falkland Island Dependencies Survey party concerning the alleged Chilean doings at Stonington Island.

Arthur Creech Jones, the British Secretary of State for Colonies, denied any British involvement in the robbery at Stonington Island: “only Britons, penguins and seals have been there. And the British did not loot the base.”⁴⁴ An official from the Colonial Office made the obvious connection: “then it must have been penguins disguised in Chilean uniforms.”⁴⁵ Apparently, some of the American equipment had been stacked on board the British *Trepassy* ready for shipment to America, when the Chileans looted it. The Chileans did not take kindly to these accusations against personnel from their Navy. The Ministry of Defense prepared an official statement denying the robbery.⁴⁶ This statement claimed that the Chilean officials found the base in a state of “disorder, destruction, and outright putrefaction.” As a consequence the Commander of the *Iquique* had explicitly ordered his men not to touch anything for fear of infection. In his private report to the Ministry of Defense the captain of the *Iquique* confessed that personnel who had not heard his order not

⁴⁴ Ministro de Defensa Nacional al Sr. Ministro de RREE, Santiago, 22 March 1947, RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ministerio de Defensa Nacional al Ministro de RR.EE. Santiago, 22 March 1947. “La declaración oficial sobre Bahía Margarita.” RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

to touch any items in the East Base took articles as “souvenirs” that were subsequently requisitioned when they returned to the ship, however it proved impossible to return them because of the dark night. He added that “the intrinsic value of the articles requisitioned is enormously less than the British press would suggest.”

Whatever the truth behind the robbery at Marguerite Bay, the official Chilean protests of innocence contrasted starkly with the noble speech given by Raul Juliet in the Chilean Senate barely two months earlier. For a short time, the emerging Antarctic who-dunnit of who robbed the American base caught the imagination of the press in the four countries involved. The incident served as a microcosm for the broader dispute in Antarctica. However trivial and amusing it may seem in retrospect, those involved did not take kindly to allegations of petty theft. The question of robbery involved the question of property and ownership. Three of the four countries involved in the robbery claimed sovereign rights over the region in question. The one country that had no official sovereignty claim to the region was the country claiming to have been wronged. Just as in the broader dispute, the question of who robbed the American base was not resolved. Instead, the question slowly petered out over the course of the following year as more pressing issues came to the fore.

Chapter 4: South American Anti-imperialism, 1947-1948

In the immediate post-war period, Argentina and Chile sought to frame their sovereignty claims to Antarctica in the language of anti-imperialism. According to the South Americans, the Antarctic Peninsula represented a geological continuation of the Andes mountains, and hence an “integral part” of their national territories. Britain’s claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies, they argued, therefore represented a colonial annexation of part of their sovereignty territory. In Argentina, despite Perón’s relatively slow embrace of the Antarctic question, the sovereignty dispute in Antarctica – along with the smoldering *irredenta* of the *Islas Malvinas* – became increasingly caught up with the new President’s attack on British “economic imperialism” in Argentina itself. Although Perón’s actions did not always match his booming economic nationalism, his policies certainly helped to bring about a rapid and terminal decline in British economic interests in Argentina. Britain’s claims to the Falkland Islands and the Falkland Islands Dependencies provided concrete examples of piratical British imperialism, which neatly complemented the rather abstract idea of economic imperialism.¹ In Chile, where British economic influence was much less marked, the Antarctic question gave the embattled President González Videla an opportunity to appeal to the moderate political left through the language of anti-imperialism.

In making their respective cases for Antarctica sovereignty, Argentina and Chile once again found common cause in the idea of a South American Antarctica.

¹ In fact, one of the indictments of Perón’s government, both at the time and afterwards, was that he was attacking an imaginary empire. Juan J. Sebrelli, *Los deseos imaginarios del peronismo: ensayo crítico*, 5. ed. (Madrid u.a., 1985).

The idea appealed to abstract notions of pan-Americanism and anti-imperialism, and helped to reinforce the still controversial argument that the Antarctic Peninsula was indeed part of the American continent. At the conference of Rio, Argentina and Chile successfully lobbied to have the boundaries of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Defense extended to the South Pole, thus including the Antarctica Peninsula region within the boundaries covered by the Treaty. Any extra-continental aggression in this part of the Antarctic continent would theoretically lead to a combined response from all the signatories to the Treaty, although the United States and a number of other countries formally reserved their position on the question of boundaries.

Once again, the British response to South American anti-imperialism in Antarctica was hampered by the overlap of formal and informal empire. A strong defense of its position in the Falkland Islands Dependencies threatened to destabilize further its precarious economic position in Argentina. Working in Britain's favor was the fact that the rhetoric of anti-imperialism also caused problems for Argentina and Chile. Most importantly, by arguing that the British presence in the region was "imperial," the two South American countries came close to conceding that there was indeed a real British "effective occupation."² A second problem with the language of anti-imperialism was that in the incipient Cold War, Great Britain in fact lined up with Argentina and Chile on the side of anti-communism. In broader national security questions it was the Soviet Union that was the real enemy now. A third problem with the rhetoric of anti-imperialism was the fact that both Argentina and Chile could be accused of imperialism themselves.

² Should the dispute ever go to arbitration such a presence would support British claims to sovereignty.

South American anti-imperialism in Antarctic reached its zenith in the 1947-48 Antarctic season. This was the most tense and hostile season so far and the US State Department secretly feared that a war might break out between the three countries involved. During this season, President González Videla became the first head of state ever to visit the Antarctic continent. With passions still high, the Ninth International Conference of American States, held in Bogotá in 1948, witnessed a full frontal attack on European imperialism in Central and South America. In order to diffuse this attack the United States supported the idea that a separate conference should be held in Havana to address this issue, hoping that they could prevent a quorum being reached and make such a conference meaningless. Although the North Americans failed to prevent the Havana conference from taking place in 1949, the absence of the Chileans from this conference severely limited the potential for discussing the Antarctic problem.

ARGENTINE ECONOMIC NATIONALISM

President Perón came to office promising a “New Argentina,” shorn of elite privilege and foreign domination. One of his principal policy objectives was to industrialize Argentina and put an end to its economic dependence on Great Britain. This economic relationship was already in a fragile state following the upheavals of the Second World War. Between 1939 and 1945, Britain had gone from being Argentina’s greatest creditor to being its greatest debtor, due to the purchase of vast quantities of foodstuffs. By the end of the war Britain owed £150m to Argentina. This money was held as blocked sterling balances, meaning that it could not be

exchanged (for dollars) on the international currency markets.³ Until 1947, however, Britain remained Argentina's second largest trading partner.⁴ Argentina continued to export massive amounts of beef to Great Britain. In exchange, Britain increased the amount of coal it shipped to the South American country and in August 1947 the two countries agreed on the sale of £20m of British military ships and planes. But this apparently favorable trading position merely papered over the numerous cracks that were rapidly developing in the Anglo-Argentine economic relationship.

In terms of economic policy, Perón's pragmatism almost matched his shrill nationalism. He was never quite as nationalistic as he would have liked people to believe, and his actions did not always match his words. A classic case of this was the economic rapprochement with the United States over the course of his first two Presidencies. In the case of British economic interests, however, Perón had much to gain and little to lose from an all-out attack. Britain's days as an economic superpower appeared to be over, and the British could be demonized for their close connection with the Argentine elite, which had recently been ejected from power. As in so many areas of national life, Perón proved adept at borrowing policy, and in relation to the Anglo-Argentine economic relationship, Perón sought to borrow policy from the anti-British nationalists of the 1930s.

The nationalist campaign against the Anglo-Argentine economic relationship focused upon the British-owned railways in Argentina, which had been the centerpiece of Britain's involvement in Argentina since the late nineteenth century.

³ On the suspension of convertibility in August 1947, see Susan Strange, *Sterling and British policy: a political study of an international currency in decline* (London, New York, 1971).

⁴ Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987: from Spanish colonization to the Falklands War and Alfonsín*.

This nationalist agitation had been ongoing since the 1930s.⁵ By publicizing the run-down state of the railways, nationalists effectively challenged Britain's "imperialistic" claims to technological superiority. Early in 1947 – amidst the patriotic fervor generated by the construction of the Argentine base San Martín in Antarctica – the British railway companies sent Sir Montague Eady to negotiate with the Argentine Government. After several months of negotiation Eady reached an agreement with the Argentine government for the sale of the British owned railways. The agreed cost of just over £150m effectively cancelled Britain's debt to Argentina.⁶ More negatively for British interests, the sale of the railways precipitated a massive exodus of British nationals from Argentina. Coming on top of the population loss during the Second World War – when many young Britons left Argentina to fight – this would prove to be a blow from which the British community would never recover.⁷

Ever the self-promoter, President Perón seized upon the sale of the British-owned railways in order to declare Argentina's "Economic Independence." Speaking in Tucumán on 9 July 1947 on the 138th anniversary of the country's declaration of political independence from Spain, Perón declared that Argentina was now free from the economic shackles of the British Empire: "in 1810 we were liberated politically, today we long for economic independence."⁸ The declaration of

⁵ Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: the Nationalist movement, its history, and its impact*. Deutsch and Dolkart, *The Argentine right: its history and intellectual origins, 1910 to the present*.

⁶ In the House of Commons, referring to the government's plans for free dentistry in the NHS, Winston Churchill quipped "Labour has sold the railways to pay for Britain's false teeth." Protesting the sale of the railways, *The Standard* of Buenos Aires paraphrased an earlier speech by Churchill: "Those representatives have not met in Buenos Aires to give away, without protest, a series of railways which, more than any other single factor have developed the stupendous economic reserves of this the most favoured of countries." *The Standard*, 5 February 1947.

⁷ Graham-Yooll, *The forgotten colony: a history of the English-speaking communities in Argentina*.

⁸ Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987: from Spanish colonization to the Falklands War and Alfonsín*. 275.

economic independence served a useful political purpose. At this stage, President Perón was still not established firmly in power. Throughout 1947 strikes swept the country, as the labor unions made more and more demands on their newly promoted benefactor. The armed forces remained a powerful threat to the President, precariously balanced in a state of watchful mistrust. Perón's appeal to nationalism and populism represented an attempt to solidify his support. On the one hand, this "boisterous and false" nationalism was little more than rhetoric, but on the other hand the anti-imperialism shaped the minds of Perón's supporters against the British.⁹

Throughout 1947 and 1948, Argentina and Britain continued their fraught financial negotiations at a governmental level. In Britain, Harold Wilson, the Minister of Commerce, stood up in the House of Commons to proclaim the importance of Argentina to Britain's economic recovery plan.¹⁰ This importance did not seem, however, to warrant the sending of a high-ranking politician to negotiate with Argentina, and even the English-language *Standard* newspaper took offense at the "colonial attitude" suggested by the dispatch of a career civil servant:

Heads of State in these days are not accustomed to treat with civil servants alone: and rightly or wrongly, missions established on no better basis are regarded as an attempt to treat the visited country as a "colony" - a term far too often used in the local press during the course of the present negotiations... The British mission has failed, no doubt, on economic grounds. But it might have got nearer to a solution and certainly would have earned more sympathy, had it been more fully associated with British business, and had it been a little more courteous to the Press than it has been.¹¹

⁹ The *Standard*, 9 July 1946. "The Ninth of July."

¹⁰ The *Standard*, 22 January 1948. "Argentina's Importance."

¹¹ The *Standard*, 11 September 1946.

Following the sale of the railways and the cancellation of British debt, the focus of these negotiations was the export of Argentine agricultural products to Great Britain, where food rationing persisted. In a demonstration of President Perón's pragmatism, the talks led to the Andes Agreement of 1948, which guaranteed the continued supply of beef to Britain, albeit at a greatly increased price.

From a structural perspective, the policy that probably did most harm to the Anglo-Argentine economic relationship was the creation of *Instituto Argentino para la Promoción del Intercambio* (IAPI), a government export monopoly on agricultural produce.¹² This policy was aimed at the Argentine land-owning elite as much as against the British. Its intention was to facilitate import substituting industrialization through the transfer of funds from the traditionally wealthy agricultural sector to the nascent industrial sector. Through IAPI the government bought agricultural goods at a price substantially below market value, and sold them on the world-market for a substantially higher price: the profits would then be diverted to industrialization. Indirectly, this represented a two-pronged attack on British economic interests in Argentina. Firstly, it artificially inflated the prices of agricultural goods on the world market. Secondly, it threatened to undermine Britain's already faltering industrial exports to Argentina. The real problem, however, was the medium-term damage that IAPI inflicted on the agricultural export sector. Blessed with almost every conceivable comparative advantage, agricultural exports had long been the foundation of the Argentine economy. Faced with the government's agricultural export monopoly, landowners found themselves short of money to invest in

¹² Susana Novick, *IAPI: auge y decadencia*, [2 ed. (Buenos Aires, 2004)].

modernization. In terms of productivity, Argentina rapidly fell behind other agricultural exporting countries such as Australia and the United States. By the early 1950s, one of the most pressing problems in the Anglo-Argentine economic relationship was that Argentina simply could not produce enough agricultural exports to satisfy Britain's demands. Economists and businessmen, both inside and outside Argentina, accused Perón of killing the goose that laid the golden egg, and in many ways these problems presaged the long-term decline of the Argentine economy in the second half of the twentieth century.¹³

Just as damaging in its own way to the Anglo-Argentine relationship as the sale of the railways, the meat negotiations, and the creation of IAPI, was the British Government's official shunning of Evita, President Perón's charismatic wife. During the 1946 election Eva Perón's charisma and lowly upbringing had helped the Colonel appeal to the urban and rural masses, the so-called *descamisados*.¹⁴ In mid-1947 Evita made a highly publicized trip to Europe, which quickly became known as the "Rainbow Tour." Following visits to Spain, Italy, and France, the First Lady of Argentina planned to visit Britain, and expected to be invited to stay at Buckingham Palace. British officials said that she would be welcome to come, but that she would not receive the honors of a full state visit and that she would not be invited to stay at Buckingham Palace. Feeling slighted, Evita stayed away. Many Argentines saw this snub as the result of oligarchic snobbery, reinforcing the notion of Great Britain as supporters of Argentina's conservative landed classes. In the wake of this episode, petty attacks on the British community in Argentina increased such as the burning of

¹³ Paul H. Lewis, *The crisis of Argentine capitalism* (Chapel Hill, 1992).

¹⁴ Literally "those without a shirt."

Palermo Cricket Club, and anti-English sentiment grew among people who were not hardened nationalists.

Both intentionally and unintentionally, President Perón presided over the decolonization of Britain's "informal empire" in Argentina. Throughout most of the first half of the twentieth century, Great Britain had been Argentina's most important trading partner. By the early 1950s, Britain's position would plummet to eleventh place, and the close trading relationship would never recover.¹⁵ This dramatic fall accompanied a rapid and terminal decline in the British community in Argentina. The role played by the Antarctic sovereignty dispute in the decline of British interests is impossible to quantify, but the incessant propaganda about the *Islas Malvinas* and Antarctica undoubtedly damaged Britain's standing in Argentina.¹⁶ President Perón used the territorial disputes to give a foundation to his accusations of British economic imperialism in Argentina. Such nationalist fervor proved easier to whip up than to dissipate, and the dispute over British claims to formal empire in the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies would last long after the decline of Britain's "informal empire" in Argentina.

SOUTH AMERICAN ANTARCTICA AND THE RIO TREATY

Despite the fact that Argentina's claims to Antarctica overlapped substantially with those of Chile, an alliance between the trans-Andean neighbors appeared to offer the best way to challenge the British Empire's claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies. The two South American countries still did not

¹⁵ Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987: from Spanish colonization to the Falklands War and Alfonsín*. 275.

¹⁶ On several occasions, the *Standard* newspaper appealed to the British government not to put forward British claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies too strongly.

agree fully on the Antarctic question. Indeed, they couldn't even decide on a common name for the southern continent. While the Argentines preferred the word *Antártida*, the Chileans were starting to use *Antártica*, partly to differentiate their claim from their South American rival.¹⁷ Nevertheless, in the confrontation with the British Empire it continued to make sense for the governments of Argentina and Chile to work together under the vague notion of a South American Antarctica. On 2 March, 1947, Raul Juliet and Juan Atilio Bramuglia, the Foreign Ministers of Chile and Argentina, met to discuss the Antarctic question during a meeting of South American foreign ministers.¹⁸ Two weeks later, the Chilean chiefs of the *Estados Mayores* [political heads of the armed forces] met to discuss Antarctic policy.¹⁹ They concluded that it would be necessary to discuss fully the question of Antarctic sovereignty with the government of Argentina.²⁰ The military officers stressed the need for a speedy resolution of the conflict with Argentina since they feared that their neighbor would beat them in any race to establish effective occupation in the

¹⁷ After an inquiry from the Ministry of Foreign Relations, Miguel Luis Amunátegui Reyes, from the Chilean Academy of language, suggested that *Antártida* was just a bad pronunciation. Miguel Luis Amunátegui Reyes al Ministro de RR.EE., 21 January 1947. RR.EE., "Antartica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48."

¹⁸ Boletín Confidencial No.13 Expedición Antártica, 3 March 1947. RR.EE., "Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49."

¹⁹ Apreciación de la Situación por los Jefes de los Estados Mayores, 19 March 1947. RR.EE., Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.

²⁰ The Chilean military officers initially suggested that negotiation with Argentina should only come after discussion with the United States and Brazil. With the United States, the Chiefs of Staff recommended, the country should agree upon the limits of Chilean Antarctic territory. With Brazil, the Brazilian government should be asked whether "it would view such an arrangement [an agreement between Chile and Argentina] as inconvenient, inopportune or unfriendly on the part of Chile." Such an attempt to include the Brazilian government in the decision making process represented a geopolitical strategy to win Brazilian support for Chile's Antarctic claims. The Chilean Minister of Foreign Relations agreed on the need for a speedy resolution of the conflict with Argentina, and for consultation with the United States, but he disagreed about the need to bring Brazil into the question. The Brazilians, he argued, had not shown any interest in Antarctic sovereignty, and it was best to keep it that way. Juliet a Ministro de Defensa Nacional. Soberanía de Chile en la Antártida, 25 April 1947. RR.EE., "Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49."

Antarctic: “the time factor is against our interests, given that it is a fact that the government of Argentina is developing in every sense an extensive plan of penetration, with a rhythm of activity ever more intense.”²¹

In preparation for international discussion of the future of Antarctica, the Chilean Antarctic Commission attempted to assemble all the scientific work conducted by the previous summer’s Chilean expedition to Antarctica.²² To fulfill its political purposes, the Commission required “exclusive use” of the scientific data gathered by the members of the expedition. The Foreign Ministry suggested a few revisions to the Chilean IGM’s 1945 map of Chilean Antarctica changing some of the place names to ones with a more patriotic flavor: the Trinity Peninsula, for example, became Peninsula O’Higgins, after the famous Independence Era Liberator of Chile.²³ Cordovez continued his indefatigable work on the economic possibilities of Antarctica. In a report made in July, Cordovez noted that, following his journey to Antarctica on board the *Angamos*, Sr. Carlos Oliver Schneider had proved the correctness of Suess’ “Antarcandes” theory and the fact that the Antarctic Peninsula is a geological continuation of the Chilean cordillera.²⁴ Schneider’s observations

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ministerio de RR.EE. a Rector of the Universidad de Chile, Solicita informes para la Comisión Chilena Antártica, 2 June 1947. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

²³ Ministerio de RR.EE. al Director del IGM, 2 June 1947. Sobre antecedentes para nuevo mapa de la Antártica Chilena. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.” On the Importance of mapping to the Antarctic sovereignty dispute see Dodds, *Pink ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire*. In October 1947, German Riesco the Chilean Foreign Minister noted that the names “Grahamland” and the “Palmer Peninsula” had become political, and suggested that on a new Chilean map of Antarctica, these British and North American names should be replaced with Tierra O’Higgins. In other words he wanted to rename the entire peninsula. Ministerio de RR.EE. a Ministro de Defensa Nacional, 24 October 1947. Cartas de la Antártica Chilena preparadas por el Departamento de Navegación e Hidrografía de la Armada. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

²⁴ Estudios Economicos de la Antártida por Enrique Cordovez M., Miembro-representante de la Armada en la Comisión Chilena Antártica, 22 July 1947. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48.”

proved the veracity of the report that Admiral Byrd had given before the US Congress in 1941. Meanwhile, according to Cordovez, the United States were jealously guarding the research done by Operation Highjump during the 1946-47 season. Cordovez concluded:

All that is previously mentioned is extraordinarily suggestive and revealing of the invaluable potential riches that the Sixth Continent is guarding, and because of this, we believe that whatever the forces that we deploy to demonstrate our rights, they should never be deplored, because our Antarctic rights, together with those of the Argentine Republic, to all of the American quadrant, which is the best zone of the frozen continent, signify unsuspected riches for the world of the future.²⁵

Antarctica, he asserted, would prove to be of unexpected value to the world of the future, reflecting once again the belief in Antarctica as a frozen *El Dorado*.

In July 1947 Juliet and Bramuglia met again to discuss the question of Antarctica. Once more, the two countries could not agree on a common frontier in Antarctica, but they could agree that the region belonged to them and to nobody else. On 12 July, the two foreign ministers issued a declaration calling for joint action between their two countries in Antarctica, and seeking continued negotiations in order to resolve the question of sovereignty. This meeting laid the foundations for a joint Argentine-Chilean position at the Conference of Rio.

In August 1947, Foreign Ministers from all of the American states met in Rio de Janeiro to negotiate and sign the Treaty of Inter-American Defense.²⁶ The

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Before the Conference of Rio, a South Atlantic Regional Aviation conference was held in Rio that discussed meteorological arrangements. Attended by Britain. N.K. Johnson (Meteorological Office Air Ministry) to Barton (CO), 23 July, 1947. TNA, CO 78/244/4.

principal motivation for this Treaty was the creation of a strong anti-Communist bloc that would stand united in the event of any hostile act by the Soviet Union. However, several Central and South American states also saw the Treaty as an opportunity to rid the Western Hemisphere of colonialism in all its forms, including the British Empire. With strong support from Chile, the Argentine representatives at Rio successfully sought to have the *Islas Malvinas* and the Antarctic Peninsula region included in the Western Hemisphere, covered by the Treaty. Theoretically this would make any British military action in the Falkland Islands Dependencies an act of aggression against the American continent, and would consequently require a combined response from all the countries in the Western Hemisphere, including the United States.

The inclusion of the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies within the Rio Treaty put the United States into an awkward situation. Since the Monroe Doctrine (of 1823) it had traditionally been US policy to oppose extra-continental colonialism in the Western Hemisphere, but, since the British takeover of the Falklands in 1833, it had done very little to protest the British occupation.²⁷ Neither Britain's possession of the Falkland Islands, nor its claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies were enough to provoke the United States to break its alliance with Great Britain. However, as shown by the interest in American sovereignty in Antarctica, and by the tacit government support for Finn Ronne's expedition, the US government clearly saw Britain's claims to the dependencies as being much weaker than those to the Falkland Islands themselves. Nevertheless, the US government

²⁷ Indeed, Barry Gough shows that a North American raid on the Argentine colony in 1831 opened the door for the British takeover two years later. Gough, *The Falkland Islands/Malvinas: the contest for empire in the South Atlantic*.

issued a note of reserve to the Rio Treaty, which stated that the United States did not recognize the inclusion of the Antarctic region, nor the Falkland Islands, as lying within the boundaries of the treaty.²⁸

Following the Conference of Rio, the British *Observer* newspaper suggested that: “It is probable that Argentina will follow her success at the Rio Conference in getting the Falkland Islands and other British possessions in the South Atlantic classed as part of the Western Hemisphere by protesting at a future conference against the illegal occupation of the Latin American territory by Great Britain.”²⁹ The Chileans were also happy with the results of the Rio Conference. They made a declaration in the final act of the conference, confirming:

The Chilean delegation declare that inside the adjacent waters to the South American continent, in the extension of coasts corresponding to the Republic of Chile in the so-called zone of security, the existence of colonies or possession of European countries is not recognized and that we especially reserve and maintain intact the legitimate titles and rights of the Republic of Chile in the lands included inside the Chilean Antarctic Sector, upon which the Republic exercises corresponding sovereignty.³⁰

Despite the United States’ reservation about the territorial limits of the treaty, Chilean officials saw the treaty as offering protection against an attack in the Antarctic Peninsula, noting that such an attack did not even need to be armed.

²⁸ *La Prensa* (Lima) 12 August 1947, “Posiblemente Canada plantee en Río de Janeiro el Status del Antártico. RR.EE., “Recortes de Prensa (3).”

²⁹ Reported in the *Standard*, 1 September 1947.

³⁰ Ministerio de RR.EE. a Ministro de Defensa Nacional, 12 September 1947. RR.EE., “Antartica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cabiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

BRITISH RESPONSE

With the American nations meeting in Rio to discuss Western Hemispheric Security, the sterling crisis of August 1947 gave an urgency to British discussions of the future of the Falkland Islands Dependencies, and especially the question of who should pay for their upkeep.³¹ With the backing of Brian Roberts at the Foreign Office Research Department, the Colonial Office pushed for an aerial survey of the Dependencies. Anticipating that a showdown with Argentina could not be postponed beyond 1948, Roberts pragmatically argued “the survey would not only show that we were active in the area, but also show which areas we should hold on to and which areas we could, if necessary, abandon.”³² The British were not averse to ceding parts of the Dependencies, but they first wanted to know what they were giving up: a lack of scientific knowledge stood in the way of British concessions. At the same time, the Colonial Office petitioned for a vessel for the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey in order adequately to supply Britain’s seven bases in the region.³³ The Treasury was keen that the revenues raised in the Dependencies should be used to finance the British expeditions, but it worried whether the exchequer would benefit under this financial arrangement if minerals should be found in the region.³⁴ Under the surface of these discussions, there was a rumbling of discontent among certain Ministers and Departments: given Britain’s dire

³¹ Strange, *Sterling and British policy: a political study of an international currency in decline*.

³² Minutes of a Meeting held in Air Ministry at 1430 hours on 18 June 1947 to discuss the Colonial Office request for an aerial survey of Grahamland. TNA, CO 78/227/1.

³³ Foreign Office (South American Department) to Chancery (Buenos Aires), 22 July 1947. TNA, T 220/1358 W476.

³⁴ Foreign Office (South American Department) to Chancery (Buenos Aires) – encloses letter from Church to Edwards, 22 July 1947. TNA, T 220/1358 W476.

financial circumstances what was the point in maintaining British territories in such a remote region?

On 8 August 1947, senior Cabinet Ministers met in the Prime Minister's room at the House of Commons to debate the question of British territories in Antarctica.³⁵ The Foreign Office circulated a minute (written after extended consultation with the other interested Ministries), which suggested that although it was undesirable to take steps which might lead to friction with Chile and the Argentine – especially given the dependence on Argentina for food – it was nevertheless a matter of principle that Britain should maintain its rights in this area. The Foreign Office minute recommended that the Governments of Argentina and Chile should confidentially be informed of Britain's intention to maintain its sovereignty in the Falkland Islands Dependencies, and given the chance to leave quietly. Furthermore, the South Americans should be informed of His Majesty's Government's willingness to take the issue to the International Court of Justice. As a last resort, and in the event that the South Americans should fail to comply with either of Britain's demands, the Foreign Office minute recommended that the commander in Chief of the America and West Indies station should be instructed "to remove the Argentine and Chilean posts from British territory." The Foreign Office also circulated a report by the Law Officers stating that while British title to the South Shetland Islands as a whole was relatively secure, its title to Gamma Island, where the Argentines had established a base, was much less certain. The Law Officers argued that if Britain did nothing to protest the Argentine occupation of Gamma Island, the Argentines might acquire a title to the island. In contrast to the

³⁵ Minutes of a meeting of Ministers held in the Prime Minister's Room, House of Commons, on Friday 8 August 1947 at 3.30pm. TNA, CAB 121/510.

hard line taken by the Foreign Office minute, the Law Officers suggested that in the event of the two governments failing to withdraw the posts, the Government should not use force to eject them but should forthwith take steps to bring the matter before the International Court. The lawyers did not believe that such a procedure would prejudice Britain's claim to sovereignty over either island or over any other area in the Antarctic.

The meeting of Cabinet Ministers opened with Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, stating that with so many things already on his hands he was most reluctant to set out upon yet another path which might lead to further international friction.³⁶ He asked whether it was really necessary for the Government to pursue this matter at the present moment. Creech Jones, the Secretary of State for Colonies, told his colleagues that as the Minister responsible for the region he thought that they should know about the encroachments taking place. Responding to the circulated memorandum, the Prime Minister questioned the emphasis placed on the strategic value of the Falkland Islands Dependencies saying that he found it difficult to believe that this remote area would be of any strategic value to Great Britain in war. The Minister of Defense replied that the Chiefs of Staff has been asked for their views on the strategic importance of the Antarctic somewhat in the abstract. He stressed the Chiefs of Staff wanted to be able to control the sea routes between the Atlantic and Pacific in times of war and to this end were keen on establishing meteorological and radar stations on the Antarctic continent. He stated that, as far as he knew, the Chiefs of Staff had not been consulted on the possibility of ejecting the Chilean and Argentine posts by force, and added that they would have to be

³⁶ Ibid. This was the period of the "transfer of power" in India and Pakistan, Palestine was becoming troublesome, and rivalry with the Soviet Union was beginning to intensify.

consulted if such an action were to be contemplated. Nonetheless, the Minister of Defense stressed the matter of principle:

Quite apart from the strategic arguments in favor of early action, the fact remained that foreign Governments were encroaching on certain territories to which we had long laid claim. If we did nothing to check this tendency our claim to the territories in question would go by default. Argentina and Chile could establish a title to the territories they had occupied and we should be establishing a most undesirable precedent, embarrassing both to ourselves and the Dominions.³⁷

In conclusion, the Prime Minister said that he agreed on the importance of maintaining Britain's title to the Dependencies, although he continued to doubt the strategic importance of the region. He thought that protests should be made to the governments of Argentina and Chile, but that the course of action should be further considered if these protests were ignored. The Committee "agreed in principle that our title to territories in the Antarctic should be maintained, and that protests at the recent encroachments should be made to the governments of Argentina and Chile."

The senior Cabinet Ministers' decision to protect Britain's title to the Falkland Islands Dependencies put British policy towards the region on firmer foundations. But the commitment at the highest level towards maintaining British sovereignty in Antarctica remained shaky, and, in particular, nothing had been done to give the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey a solid financial structure. A Cabinet Paper from September 1947 reported that the Ministers concerned had rejected alternative policies of internationalization or partition by agreement.³⁸ The

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Cabinet Paper (47) 263 "The Antarctic," 24 September 1947. TNA, T 220/1358

paper summarized the reasoning behind the Ministers' decision: "the arguments in favor of this policy [of making a protest to the governments of Chile and Argentina and encouraging them to take the case to the International Court of Justice], apart from the desire not to abandon claims established through our previous expeditions, are for the general strategic interest of the Antarctic and its potential importance from the standpoint of our communications and meteorology, and possibly of mineral production if means could be found to exploit it." It went on to note that actual expenditure was not large - £44,000, most of which would be recovered from a special stamp issue - but also explicitly stated "the line in this paper does not commit us now to policy in 1948-49." The paper concluded "the action proposed holds no greater dangers to our economic relations with Argentina than any other course of action."

In preparation for the 1947-48 season, Mr. Carter at the Colonial Office drafted a letter stating how far the British would go in defense of British rights to the Falkland Islands Dependencies.³⁹ Questioning the policy of aggression in one place and of acquiescence in another, Carter noted: "If we are prepared to agree to the use of force, then we must be ready to back it to the last ditch. Any action short of actual war is bound to be converted by the Argentines and Chileans to their advantage by reasons of their geographical propinquity." Protest without the threat of sanctions, he added, only becomes a source of ridicule. By December 1947, the plans for an aerial survey of the Falkland Islands Dependencies, which had been discussed throughout the year, had to be cancelled due to cuts in RAF and Naval personnel.⁴⁰

³⁹ Draft letter from Mr. Carter (CO), 23 September 1947. TNA, CO 537/4010.

⁴⁰ Shuckburgh (FO) to Group Captain Stapleton (Cabinet Offices), 15 December 1947. TNA, CO 78/227/1.

The financial and technical difficulties of the survey outweighed its strategic advantage. The Foreign Office could see no political interest in pressing for this survey, since it would not contribute materially towards the strengthening of Britain's political position in the Dependencies. Nevertheless, despite the handicaps imposed by the financial constraints of Britain's precarious economic situation, British officials continued to do as much as they could to maintain British claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies. Everyone feared that the 1947-48 season would see the challenge to Britain's position intensifying even further.

1947-48 SEASON

South American anti-imperialism in Antarctica reached its zenith in the 1947-48 season. This summer would be the most hostile so far as Argentina and Chile, loosely allied behind the idea of a South American Antarctica, brazenly challenged Britain's position in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. The British Empire appeared to be in retreat throughout the world. In August 1947, India and Pakistan had achieved their independence; Sri Lanka would follow in February 1948. Trouble in Palestine threatened to place further strain on the relationship between Britain and the United States. At home, the British economy remained in a precarious state. Many people believed that the British Empire was on its very last legs. The governments in Buenos Aires and Santiago knew little of the British government's decision to reinforce its position in Antarctica, and they sought to capitalize on this rising tide of anti-imperialism and colonial nationalism by pushing their own claims to the Antarctic Peninsula.

The Argentines got off to an early start in the 1947-48 season. On 12 December, 1947 the Argentine Navy established a base on Deception Island. This represented a direct challenge to the British base already there. The confrontational tone of this move set the tone for the season. On the following day, Contralmirante Gregorio A. Portillo made a flight over the Antarctic Peninsula, leaving from an Argentine airbase in Patagonia. Ironically, the Argentine Government had made arrangements to send a navigator to the Empire Air Navigation School at Shawbury, to study polar flying technique.⁴¹ They even planned to make a flight to the South Pole in a Lincoln plane, recently purchased from Britain.⁴² In February, Argentina established a temporary shore station at Admiralty Bay, near the British Base (G).

Creech Jones, the British Colonial Secretary, was very disturbed at Argentine landings in the Falkland Islands Dependencies.⁴³ In a paper prepared for a Cabinet meeting in early January 1948, he put three options to his colleagues: an appeal to the UN Security Council; the use of Naval Forces to help in enforcing domestic law; the use of Naval Forces to expel the intruders. The Colonial Office paper pointed out that these options would all threaten serious friction with Argentina, at a time when the Anglo-Argentine economic negotiations were at a critical stage. Nonetheless, the Colonial Secretary clearly did not think that such conclusions should stand in the way of Britain's defense of its Antarctic sovereignty.

In response to the Colonial Office paper, Treasury officials acknowledged the awkwardness of the timing, adding that not only did hostility in Antarctica threaten

⁴¹ Group Captain C.E. Chilton to Barton (CO), 3 December 1947. TNA, CO 78/227/1

⁴² Shuckburgh (FO) to Group Captain Stapleton (Cabinet Offices), 15 December 1947. TNA, CO 78/227/1

⁴³ Argentine and the Falkland Islands (C.P.(48)12), E Rowe Dutton, 7 January 1948. TNA, T 220/1358

an on-going trade mission, but also the sale of the railways, which had yet to go through: “We have therefore at stake the fate of an external asset worth £150m, if we succeed in persuading Argentina to carry out the agreement to buy at that price. If they run out of the bargain, the value of the asset will fall very sharply indeed.”⁴⁴ The Treasury once again questioned the worth of holding onto the Falkland Islands Dependencies at all, arguing that the Colonial Office had “not explained in what circumstances strategic points in the dependencies could be valuable.”⁴⁵ They acknowledged that “the wider effects of a bad example here may be more serious,” but they went on to argue that “in no other instance have we anything like the same amount at stake.”⁴⁶

The overlap of formal and informal empire in the question of Antarctic sovereignty created a unique situation that was not replicated elsewhere. In other colonial situations, Treasury Officials argued, “we should be in a position to react much more vigorously.” This was an explicit statement that Britain’s relationship with Argentina was tying its hands in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. Furthermore, the British could not rely on American support in the Antarctic: “It may be both humiliating and infuriating to have to give way but the balance of advantage seems clear.” The Treasury concluded its case resolutely:

Nevertheless, we are scarcely in a position to judge to what extent the Argentines would press their claims if faced with a bold front. What is perfectly clear is that if we hold our hands on Deception Island in the interests of our financial and commercial negotiations, we must push the

⁴⁴ Argentine and the Falkland Islands (C.P.(48)12), E Rowe Dutton, 7 January 1948. TNA, T 220/1358.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

latter to a successful issue. We must not give way in both places, and there is much to be said for keeping the Deception Island issue long, even for several months, pending the outcome of the financial negotiations. This may be inconvenient in the view of the Governor's projected tour, but much of the difficulty lies in timing.⁴⁷

In early February 1948, the Foreign Office Minister McNeil gave a speech to the House of Commons outlining the position taken by Britain in the Antarctic Dispute. Both Argentina and Chile, McNeil informed MPs, had rejected Britain's offer to take the case to the International Court of Justice in The Hague. He argued that such a refusal to submit to international arbitration could only be taken as a demonstration that the South Americans did not have much confidence in their legal titles.

In comparison to earlier seasons, British activity in Antarctica during the summer 1947-48 was relatively muted. The financial position of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey had not been settled by the Cabinet decision of September 1947, and to a large extent British Antarctic policy remained in limbo. The British bases at Port Lockroy (A) and Admiralty Bay (G) were re-opened, but no new bases were constructed. However, in one important development, the Falkland Island Dependency Survey purchased HMS *Pretext* and renamed it MV *John Biscoe*. This meant that the Survey had its own ship and would be less reliant upon the Navy.

Not to be outdone by the Argentines or the British, the Chileans sent two ships to Antarctica early in the Antarctic season. They established a new base on the Trinity Peninsula at the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. The Chileans, however, saved their trump card until late in the season. In February, President González Videla himself sailed to the Antarctic Peninsula on board the *Pinto* and became the first

⁴⁷ Ibid.

head of state ever to visit the Southern Continent. During his voyage González Videla made a series of patriotic speeches calling for Antarctica to be included in the Pan American Treaty of Mutual Defense, and railing against the “spent imperialism” of British claims to Antarctica.⁴⁸ On 17 February, for example, González Videla gave a speech at the Chilean Puerto Soberanía base on Greenwich Island:

You have completed with valor, self denial, and sacrifice your mission in these inhospitable regions of Antarctica, as befits the glorious tradition of our country. You have guarded the national patrimony in the part of Antarctica that corresponds to the American continent, which was bequeathed to us and our patria by the heroes of our nation. The bad habits of antiquated European imperialism threaten, with armed violence, to snatch from Chile and America the possession of these lands of ours.⁴⁹

The President’s message was clear: Britain should abandon its “illegal and unjust” claims to the so-called Falkland Islands Dependencies. The British Empire’s active assertion of sovereignty, the President continued, was in direct contravention of the terms of the recently signed Pan-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, the boundaries of which stretched all the way to the South Pole. He called upon the other Republics of America to assist against this external aggression, conveniently forgetting that Chilean claims also conflicted directly with those of neighboring Argentina.

The President’s visit to Antarctica clearly had domestic as well as international motivations. González Videla was in serious difficulty after the banning of the Communist Party. His visit to Antarctica offered a welcome

⁴⁸ Pyne, *The ice*.

⁴⁹ Ministerio de RR.EE. Circular No.15, 18 February 1948. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48.”

distraction that would appeal to the patriotic sentiment of Chilean citizens. As a news report from Caracas revealed, however, there was some confusion over his motives.⁵⁰ Upon his return to Santiago, early in March 1948, González Videla gave a curious speech to the crowds that welcomed him home. In the speech he set out the now familiar list of Chilean rights to sovereignty in Antarctica, before attacking British imperial pretensions in the region: “We would deny our glorious history, we would deny our past, if we were to renounce one single piece of Chilean territory just because there are those who believe that acts of imperialism today constitute a title of sovereignty.”⁵¹ Then, with a rhetorical sleight of hand, he linked British Imperialism in Antarctica with Communist propaganda in Chile, which he saw as Soviet meddling in Chile. The defense of Chilean national sovereignty involved both defending Chile’s rights to Antarctica and keeping communist influence out of the country. This was clearly an attempt to sway United States’ opinion towards supporting Chile (and Argentina) against the British in Antarctica.

Nieto del Rio, the Chilean Ambassador to the United States, sent the Chilean Foreign Ministry the transcript of a press conference with Secretary of State General George Marshall concerning the sovereignty dispute in Antarctica.⁵² Marshall said that he read the news about the dispute every day, and then he reminded the press of the reservation that the United States had made to the Treaty of Rio, saying that his country did not recognize the territorial limits of the treaty as incorporating the Antarctic region. The US Secretary of State said that it was a matter to be resolved

⁵⁰ Nieto del Rio a Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores. 20 February 1948. RR.EE., “Comunicaciones con EE.UU. de América, 1948-1949.”

⁵¹ Ministerio de RR.EE. Circular No.17, 3 March 1948. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48.”

⁵² Nieto del Rio a Ministro de RR.EE., 19 February 1948. RR.EE., “Comunicaciones con EE.UU. de América, 1948-1949.”

between the three countries concerned, although he refused to be drawn on whether the question should be put before the International Court of Justice. Under the headline “Antarctic Imperialism,” the *Washington Post* criticized the governments of Argentina and Chile for misunderstanding the terms of the Treaty of Rio, noting “Argentina’s attempt to misuse the Rio accord is especially unctuous, since she has not yet ratified the pact.”⁵³ The newspaper called for the whole question of Antarctic territorial claims to be settled on a world basis. For its part, the United States made a much smaller contribution to the 1947-48 season than it had done a year earlier. Operation Windmill – so named because of its use of helicopters – sought only to fill in some of the gaps left by Operation Highjump.

PAN-AMERICAN CONFERENCES

Early in 1948, the British-born novelist Christopher Isherwood, by then a naturalized citizen of the United States, traveled to Argentina. He recorded his experiences in the travel book *The Condor and the Cows*, which was published the following year. Having lived in Germany during the 1930s, Isherwood was in a good position to compare President Perón with Adolf Hitler and test the oft-voiced accusation that Argentina was a fascist country. He rejected comparisons between Nazi Germany and Peronist Argentina: “where Hitler scowled, Perón beamed a large, confident all-embracing political smile.”⁵⁴ The Argentine president did, however, rely heavily on nationalist propaganda:

⁵³ *Washington Post*, 23 February 1948, “Antarctic Imperialism.” RR.EE., “Comunicaciones con EE.UU. de América, 1948-1949.” The newspaper observed: “How the State Department regards the relationship of these claims to other world problems is indicated by the fact that American interests in Antarctica are handled by the Northern European Division.”

⁵⁴ Christopher Isherwood, *The Condor and the Cows, a South American travel-diary* (New York, 1949). 208.

Actually, at the moment, Perón's chief propaganda drive is directed against Great Britain, not the U.S.A. It centers on the Antarctic – or, at any rate, that segment of it which is directly south of Cape Horn – and also includes the Falklands and their dependent islands.... Recently, the Peronist press has been full of demands that the Malvinas and a part of Antarctica shall be recognized as Argentinean territory. In this demand, Argentina has allied itself with Chile, which is also to get its slice. There are even reports that uranium ore has been discovered down there – in which case, of course, the dispute would become serious; provided that the uranium could ever be mined. At present, however, it seems very doubtful that Perón really wants the Malvinas, much less the Antarctic. He is simply whipping up nationalist sentiment and making an inexpensive bid for Chilean friendship.⁵⁵

According to Isherwood, the British were not much alarmed by this. At a geopolitical level, they felt safe in the belief that the United States would support their continued occupation of the Falkland Islands. However, at the same time, the strength of anti-British national feeling being whipped up by Perón was anything but trivial, and reveals how successful Argentine politicians had been in presenting the dispute as a South American struggle against British Imperialism.

On 4 March 1948, Don Germán Vergara Donoso, the Chilean Minister of Foreign Relations, and Dr. Pascual de la Rosa, the head of the Argentine Antarctic Commission, met in Santiago to sign “a joint declaration on the indisputable rights of Chile and Argentina in South American Antarctica.”⁵⁶ The declaration was the strongest yet of the mutual rights of both countries to sovereignty in Antarctica. It established that both governments would act together in the protection and juridical defense of their rights in the Southern Continent. In addition, it made provision for

⁵⁵ Ibid. 211.

⁵⁶ Ministerio de RR.EE. Circular No.18. Santiago, 5 March 1948. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48.” See also *La Unión*, 4 March 1948.

the two countries to meet later in the year to continue the negotiations to arrive at jointly recognized frontiers in the Antarctica. This latter provision represented a thinly veiled disguise of the fact that the two countries could still not agree upon the territorial limits of their respective claims. Nevertheless, the Chilean press commented on the importance of the Donoso-La Rosa declaration and declared that it represented a practical example of the “cordial and democratic way in which the countries of Latin American know how to resolve their questions of territorial sovereignty.” The first task for the newly confirmed Argentine-Chilean alliance would come at the Ninth International Conference of American States conference held in Bogotá at the very beginning of April 1948.

The Bogotá conference gained notoriety for a communist coup d'état that temporarily overthrew the government of Colombia and sent the delegates fleeing to their embassies, but it also proved an opportunity for the countries of the Western Hemisphere to discuss substantive issues. After order had been regained and the government restored, the member countries of the International Conference of American States continued their negotiations on the future of the Western Hemisphere. Alongside such issues as economic development, regional transport, and agriculture, Argentina and Chile were keen to raise the question of Antarctica, and, in the case of Argentina, the Falkland Islands. The central issue was whether the regions claimed by Great Britain in Antarctica and the South Atlantic were covered by the Inter-American Treaty of Defense, which had been signed at Rio the previous year. In their vocal anti-colonialism, the representatives of the two Southern Cone countries made common cause with the Guatemalans, who had their own territorial dispute with Britain's possession of British Honduras (Belize). The

Standard reported “most of the major South American nations have formed an apparently solid bloc to drive European Colonies out of the Western Hemisphere.”⁵⁷

Bramuglia spoke of Chilean support for a Antarctic Conference to resolve the Antarctic question, but the Chilean Foreign Ministry re-iterated to their delegation that their instructions were limited to making the Chilean case for Antarctic sovereignty and seeking a “declaration of the conference expressing the sympathies of the American countries towards the position adopted by Chile and Argentina in the Antarctic question and of the general American interest in the question of South American Antarctica.”

Rumors that the US might change publicly its policy towards Antarctica further complicated negotiations at the Bogotá conference.⁵⁸ However, from Washington, Nieto del Rio wrote that the State Department denied that there was about to be any change in US policy.⁵⁹ The Chilean Ambassador added that he knew confidentially that there was no agreement between the State Department and the Ministry of Defense about what US policy should be, although they were hoping to reach an agreement before the following Antarctic summer. From Bogotá, Hernandez, the head of the Chilean delegation, informed his Ministry that the US delegation under Daniels had been preparing to make an official statement on US claims to Antarctica in response to any statements made by Chile or Argentina.⁶⁰ They had reconsidered this position, however, due to concern that such a statement

⁵⁷ *The Standard*, 29 March 1948. “Solid South American Bloc at Bogotá.”

⁵⁸ Vergara (Ministro de RR.EE.) a Embachile Washington, 16 April 1948. RR.EE., “Comunicaciones con EE.UU. de América, 1948-1949.”

⁵⁹ Nieto del Rio a Ministro de RR.EE., 19 April 1948. RR.EE., “Comunicaciones con EE.UU. de América, 1948-1949.”

⁶⁰ Hernandez (Bogotá) a Ministro de RR.EE., 19 April 1948. RR.EE., “Comunicaciones con EE.UU. de América, 1948-1949.”

would be “badly understood by public opinion in both countries.” As long as the Chileans and Argentines limited themselves to statements about Antarctica and did not seek a resolution of the Conference, Daniels told Hernandez, the United States would not make a declaration. This veiled US threat seems to have convinced the two South American countries not to press the Antarctic question too far.

Undoubtedly swayed by US pressure, neither the Argentine nor the Chilean delegations in Bogotá attempted to get a conference resolution concerning the Antarctic question. Both countries did, however, make extended declarations concerning their rights.⁶¹ In what was by now becoming familiar rhetoric Hernandez, the head of the Chilean delegation, set out Chile’s rights to Antarctica, which he claimed dated back to the Spanish colonial period, attacked the British, and spoke of trans-Andean fraternity with Argentina. Instead of addressing the question of European colonialism in the American hemisphere directly, many of the members of the International Conference of American States decided to re-convene later in the year specifically to discuss the question. The chosen destination was Havana.

The United States State Department believed that there was a real threat of war over the question of sovereignty in Antarctica, and worried about being caught in the middle of such a conflict. North American officials put pressure on countries not to attend the Havana conference, hoping unsuccessfully to prevent a quorum being reached. Chile, however, was one of the countries that bowed to US pressure not to attend. The non-attendance of Chile took away a lot of the tension, especially in Antarctica, since it made it impossible to promote the popular idea of a “South American Antarctica.” Enrique Covarinos, the Argentine Delegate declared that

⁶¹ Discurso pronunciado en sesión plenaria por el Jefe de la Delegación Chilena a la Conferencia de Bogotá. D. Juvenal Hernández. 21 April 1948. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Varios, 1940-48.”

Argentina would not be bringing the question of the *Islas Malvinas* or Antarctica before the meeting, since an agreement had been reached with Britain in London on the procedure to solve the dispute.⁶² According to the *Standard*, Covarinos believed that “the question of the colonies was not a matter that could be solved in a day or a year, but at its meeting the Inter-American Commission on Dependent Territories would be the first real step towards doing something towards an eventual solution.” Such reticence did not prevent Covarinos from outlining to the conference, in a two hour long speech, Argentina’s rights to the *Islas Malvinas* and all the territories claimed within the Dependencies.⁶³ Argentina made an official reservation concerning the *Malvinas* and Antarctica.⁶⁴

⁶² *The Standard*, 16 March 1949.

⁶³ *The Standard*, 18 March 1949.

⁶⁴ Nieto del Rio, Washington, a Ministro de RR.EE., La Comisión Americana de Territorios Dependientes y Antártica. 25 July 1949. RR.EE., “Comunicaciones con EE.UU. de América, 1948-1949.”

Chapter 5: Antarctic Detente, 1948-1950

Following the drama of the 1947-48 Antarctic season and the shrill anti-imperialism of the Bogotá conference, the onset of winter imposed its annual brake on human activity in the continent. As the oceans froze over and the ships sailed home, the exigencies of the Antarctic environment presented the various participants with an opportunity for reflection upon the increasing hostile dispute. In Washington D.C. the State Department's somber assessment that "nations have gone to war over lesser issues" focused attention on possible ways to resolve the dispute.¹ The Iron Curtain had descended over Europe, and the United States could not afford to have its Cold War allies fighting among themselves. North American politicians led the way in attempting to resolve the sovereignty question. They received considerable support from the Chileans, who realized that their prospects in Antarctica would benefit from a close partnership with the United States (as demonstrated by their refusal to attend the Havana conference). Between 1948 and 1950, the Antarctic sovereignty dispute went through a period of detente, with all sides agreeing not to push the issue to the brink. It was to the great relief of the United States when Great Britain, Argentina, and Chile signed a tri-partite naval agreement in time for the 1948-49 summer season, by which they agreed not to send warships south of 60°S. This agreement would subsequently be renewed every year until 1959.

Beneath the surface of these goodwill gestures, however, lay expediency rather than idealism. None of the proposals made in this period managed to resolve satisfactorily the underlying question of who owned Antarctica. In this constrained

¹ Antarctica. Secret, National Security Council Report, NSC 21, July 13, 1948, 9pp. NSA, Presidential Directives PD00070.

but still contentious atmosphere the performance of Antarctic science continued to offer the three sides one of the principal means with which to demonstrate their sovereignty in a relatively non-confrontational manner. The British continued to focus on the science of meteorology. The Antarctic climate offered something tangible to study, and the ability to forecast the weather held out the prospects of strategic, economic, and legal benefits. These practical advantages came on top of the abstract notion of environmental authority: that the country with the best scientific work in Antarctica seemed to have a moral claim to Antarctic sovereignty. Rather than seeking to challenge the connection between science and sovereignty, Argentina in particular increasingly tried to beat Britain at its own imperial game. The continued recourse to scientific research reinforced the connection between Antarctic science and Antarctic politics.

US PEACE PLANS

In the immediate aftermath of the Bogotá conference, a National Security Council Report summed up the dilemma facing the United States in reference to the Antarctic sovereignty dispute:

The dispute between Great Britain on the one side and Argentina and Chile on the other over conflicting claims in the Antarctic, while almost entirely a matter of prestige, is a source of embarrassment to the United States because of our close relation to Great Britain and our commitments in the Western Hemisphere. This embarrassment is susceptible of exploitation by the USSR to the further disadvantage of the United States.²

² Ibid.

The report continued in somewhat alarmist fashion: “while it seems unlikely that war could break out over disputed claims in Antarctica, it cannot be denied that wars in the past have grown out of disputes of even more trivial nature.” The dispute placed the United States in a very awkward situation. On both sides its allies were demanding that it take a stand against the other. The possibility existed that the dispute would become openly hostile with the threat that the United States might get drawn into an armed conflict, or risk breaking its obligations to one side or the other.

Just as the United States feared, the Soviet Union quickly latched onto the discord among the Western Alliance that was generated by the Antarctic sovereignty dispute. The Chilean military attaché in Buenos Aires, for example, relayed to his ministry reports originating from Radio Moscow that alleged that the United States had reached a military agreement with Argentina over Antarctica.³ The Chilean Foreign Ministry clearly regarded the reports as false, especially given the US position at the conference of Bogotá, and attributed them to communist attempts to distance Great Britain from the United States. Direct Soviet interest and presence in Antarctica was also increasing, with the establishment of an annual Antarctic whaling expedition, and statements about Russian sovereignty in Antarctica from the Soviet Geographical Congress.

A further complicating factor in North American Antarctic policy making was the fact that the United States continued to believe that it had good claims to large parts of the Antarctic Continent, including areas of the Antarctic Peninsula. These claims rested on the extensive history of US exploration and discovery in the Southern Continent. However, the recent “Highjump” and “Windmill” expeditions

³ Ministerio de RR.EE. al Ministro de Defensa (Guerra), July 1948. Posición de Chile en el asunto antártico. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

had significantly changed perceptions of Antarctica. Whereas the earlier expeditions of Admiral Byrd had deliberately fostered the idea of Antarctica as a “frozen El Dorado,” brimming with valuable minerals, the two postwar military expeditions in Antarctica suggested that there was little immediate potential for economic gain. In particular, the postwar expeditions had revealed that the prospect of finding uranium was very small.⁴ Given the damage being done to US diplomatic relations on the one side, and given the small economic incentive for possession of parts of the continent on the other, the obvious policy for the United States Government was therefore to try to resolve the sovereignty dispute in a manner that would be acceptable to the three countries involved. Although US Antarctic policy remained confused and uncertain, due to differences of opinion between the State Department and the Department of Defense, some form of internationalism seemed to offer the best prospect.⁵ “An international administration,” US Officials optimistically reasoned, “would also provide a solution to the dispute between Great Britain, Argentina, and Chile. A surrender of sovereignty claims by all three disputants which did not give an advantage to any one of them would cause no loss of prestige.”⁶

The first form of internationalism suggested by the United States was a form of UN Trusteeship. This solution had the advantage that it did not ostensibly exclude any nation from the Antarctic continent, and in particular would not offend the Soviet Union. Another benefit of such a policy was that it gave the impression that

⁴ Additionally, in the early 1950s, the United States found fairly abundant uranium supplies in Utah and Colorado, thereby lowering the desirability of any Antarctic uranium.

⁵ For a good overview of US Antarctic policy in this period, see Jason Kendall Moore, "Tethered to an Iceberg: United States Policy toward the Antarctic, 1939-49," *Polar Record* 35 (1999).

⁶ Antarctica. Secret, National Security Council Report, NSC 21, July 13, 1948, 9pp. NSA, Presidential Directives PD00070.

the United States was doing everything that it could to support the United Nations Organization. In terms of the legal status of Antarctic Trusteeship, the 1948 National Security Council Report argued:

While the trusteeship system of the United Nations was established primarily “for the development of peoples, not penguins”, there is nothing in the Charter excluding the application of a trusteeship to uninhabited areas. In fact the establishment of a trusteeship over Antarctica would appear to be justified by the first of the four basic objectives of the system as stated under Article 76, viz., “to further international peace and security.”

Because “science” was the principal activity in Antarctica, US officials reasoned that the major purpose of a UN trusteeship council for the Southern Continent should be scientific administration. “Since scientists in general subscribe to the doctrine that ‘science knows no boundaries,’” the National Security Report added, “and since the bulk of the ‘population’ in Antarctica at any one time would be composed of members of scientific expeditions or stations, national frictions should be reduced to a minimum.” In particular, scientific research in Antarctica offered great opportunities for developments in the science of meteorology.

Although the North American proposal for United Nations Trusteeship in Antarctica envisioned its continued administration by interested nations, it clearly involved a renunciation of sovereignty rights to the continent. In August 1948, the United States officially circulated its Trusteeship ideas. Of the seven nations that had made claims to ownership of the Antarctic continent, only New Zealand met the US proposal with any enthusiasm. The British were adamant that they did not want the Antarctic question submitted to the United Nations, which would, they argued, inevitably lead to Communist Bloc interest and involvement. The Argentines and

Chileans shared Britain's fears of communist penetration, adding that they could not contemplate any surrender of their rights over a "fundamental part" of their national territory. France, Norway, and Australia, the other three claimant nations, advanced similar objections to the US Trusteeship proposal. The United States underestimated the strengths of national feeling towards Antarctica, and also underestimated the levels of hostility against any form of Soviet involvement in the Southern Continent. The United States withdrew its trusteeship idea, but continued to pursue its search for an international solution to the Antarctic problem.

The British objection to the idea of a UN Trusteeship for Antarctica presented the United States with the biggest problem. Given Britain's international standing, British support would be needed to give any form of internationalization a chance of success. Following the withdrawal of their trusteeship proposal, United States diplomats discussed the question of Antarctica with their British colleagues. The British Foreign Office was open to some form of internationalization, but they were insistent that the Soviet Union should be excluded and, therefore, that the United Nations had to be avoided. Instead of the United Nations, the British were prepared to accept some form of international condominium for Antarctica, through which the seven countries with territorial claims, plus the United States, would pool their individual sovereignties into a collective sovereignty over the entire continent. This proposal would involve a renunciation national sovereignty, but the continuation, and possible extension, of influence in the continent. It would also have the benefit of permanently excluding the Soviet Union. The British attitude towards the US peace plans reveals an openness to the idea of compromise in Antarctica in keeping with its broader post-war attitude towards its empire more generally, in which it was willing to "decolonize" certain parts with the hope that

these areas – such as India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka – would stay within the “British sphere.”⁷

Shortly after the rejection of its trusteeship proposal, the United States circulated its new idea for an eight-power condominium in Antarctica. British adherence to this plan was not advertised, but it was suspected in both Argentina and Chile, especially since the strategically important sub-Antarctic islands would be excluded by the terms of arrangement (and the South Americans feared that the British price for participation would be US recognition of British sovereignty in such places as Deception Island). Except for Britain and New Zealand, none of the other five nations with claims to Antarctica supported the US proposal. In rejecting the North American proposal, the Chileans cited various historical examples of failed condominiums, such as the Anglo-Egyptian arrangement in the Sudan.⁸ The underlying reason for the South American rejection, however, remained the same as with the Trusteeship proposal: politicians, officials, and increasingly the general public, were coming to believe that Antarctica was a part of the national territories of Argentina and Chile, and any form of renunciation of sovereignty would be seen as surrender. The various forms of South American propaganda were raising the stakes of the dispute and having an active impact on international diplomacy.

THE CHILEAN *MODUS VIVENDI*

From the Chilean perspective, one of their greatest possibilities of “winning” the sovereignty dispute came from the prospect of US support for the Chilean claim.

⁷ See, for example, John Darwin, *Britain and decolonisation: the retreat from empire in the post-war world*, The Making of the 20th century (New York, 1988).

⁸ Ministro de RR.EE. a Claude Bowers, 7 September 1948. RR.EE., “Antártico, 1939-52.”

Since at least 1940, Chilean Antarctic policy had been loosely linked to that of the United States, with Chilean officials closely following developments in North America. However, the North American attitude towards Antarctica at the conference of Bogotá, and their subsequent ideas to bring a peaceful solution to the dispute, suggested that the US government was not openly going to favor South American rights to the Southern Continent at the expense of Great Britain. This realization –together with recognition of the ill feeling being generated by the Antarctic dispute – led to a re-thinking of Chilean Antarctic policy.

In the aftermath of the 1947-48 season, the Defense Minister, in particular, became critical of Chilean participation in a “race for bases” that he did not believe Chile was capable of winning. On 20 April 1948, the Chilean Minister of Defense wrote a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Relations setting out in detail his opinions about the Antarctic question.⁹ He did not think that the building of new Chilean bases would be feasible from either an economic or a political perspective. Chile had already spent over 10 million pesos building its first two bases, and any further expenditure threatened the well being of an already weak national economy. Besides this, any further Chilean activity in Antarctica threatened to stimulate accelerated building programs by Argentina and Great Britain, both of which had a much greater economic capacity than Chile. Instead, the Minister of Defense thought that it would be in Chile’s best interest, at that time, to attempt to slow down the rapid penetration of the Antarctic continent. If Chile were to build more bases in the following summer, this could lead to a clash with British units that might cause great offense to the Armed Forces to the detriment to the national honor. According to the Defense

⁹ Ministro de Defensa Nacional al Sr. Ministro de RR.EE., 20 April 1948. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

Minister, all the advice suggested that Chile should “delay for now this period of penetration and sovereignty and focus instead upon the more serene project of scientific investigation.” This course of action would quiet the passions surrounding the complicated Antarctic issue. Interestingly, the Minister of Defense concluded that a greater scientific program in the Southern continent would have the added benefit of revealing the probable riches of the region, and he explained that he had already been in discussion with the Rector of the Universidad de Chile about the possibility of forming a technical-scientific organization to carry out this work.

The Minister of Foreign Relations did not completely agree with the analysis of his colleague in the Ministry of Defense, and he replied with a letter stressing the Foreign Ministry’s prerogative in Antarctic affairs.¹⁰ However, an internal Foreign Ministry discussion of the reorganization of the Antarctic Commission recognized that, despite the two Chilean expeditions to Antarctica, Chile “remained very behind in scientific investigation, especially relative to the British and North Americans.”¹¹

Julio Escudero, the international lawyer who had been influential in the initial Chilean decree of 1940 delimiting Chilean Antarctica, shared the Defense Minister’s attitude. Escudero had long counseled against getting involved in a race for bases, believing that from a legal perspective, Chile’s best interests were served through its historic claims and titles, and through agreement with Argentina. Escudero came up with the idea that for a period of five years (which would be renewable) scientific

¹⁰ German Vergara (Ministro de RR.EE.) a Ministro de Defensa Nacional, 6 May 1948. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

¹¹ Memorandum (Pinochet), 18 May 1948. RR.EE., “Antártica Chilena, Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

research should be conducted in Antarctica without it affecting the question of sovereignty in any way.¹²

Escudero first mentioned his ideas for an Antarctic *modus vivendi* during the visit of Caspar Green, the Antarctic representative of the US State Department, in July 1948.¹³ At the time, the United States was still proposing United Nations Trusteeship as the answer to the territorial question in Antarctica. Initially, US officials were not particularly keen on the idea of a *status quo* agreement in Antarctica. Following the failure of the United Nations Trusteeship proposal, as we have seen, the United States suggested an eight-power condominium for Antarctica, rather than the *modus vivendi* proposed by Escudero. At a meeting in Washington held to discuss the US condominium proposal, Mr. Mills, the head of the State Department's Pacific Coast Division of the American Republics, told the Chilean Ambassador Rodríguez that the State Department had studied with the greatest interest the plans handed by Escudero to Green, but concluded that the proposed formula would only dilate the problem, rather than resolving it.¹⁴ Rodríguez replied that Chile had always favored the friendly discussion of Antarctic sovereignty questions, as the Escudero plan had made clear. He explained that it would very difficult for a country such as Chile, which was secure in its rights to Antarctica, simply to give them up to an international commission. The benefit of the Chilean plan, he argued, was precisely that no government would have to renounce their

¹² Jorge Berguño, "Intellectual Origins of the Antarctic Treaty." Paper presented at 2nd SCAR Workshop in the history of Antarctic Science, Santiago, September 2006.

¹³ During the Bogotá Conference, the Chileans had invited the State Department to send a delegate to Santiago to discuss the Antarctic question. See, for example, Ministerio de RR.EE. al presidente de la delegación chilena a la novena conferencia Panamericana, 15 April 1948. RR.EE., "Comunicaciones con EE.UU. de America, 1948-1949."

¹⁴ Nieto del Rio al Ministro de RR.EE., 3 September 1948. RR.EE., "Antártico, 1939-52."

claims, and that this would encourage co-operative scientific work in Antarctica. After expressing complete agreement with the United States on the need to keep the Soviet Union out of Antarctica, Rodríguez concluded the meeting by encouraging the United States to use the Escudero plan as the basis for future negotiations in Antarctica.

From the end of 1948, following the clear failure of the United States' plan for an eight-power condominium in Antarctica, North American officials began to consider the Escudero *modus vivendi* more seriously. The Chileans had informally distributed their idea to several of the governments with an interest in Antarctica, and it had proved to be relatively popular. In France the Quai d'Orsay found the Chilean suggestions preferable to those of the North Americans.¹⁵ In Argentina, Pascal La Rosa, the head of the Argentine Antarctic Institute, responded that his government was at least willing to consider the *modus vivendi* suggestion.¹⁶

By the end of 1949, the Chileans and United States had entered into a form of loose partnership in order to move forward with the idea of the *modus vivendi* in Antarctica. In November, the US Department of State informed the Chileans that they considered this solution to be the best way of resolving the Antarctic sovereignty issue.¹⁷ The North Americans said that they would give the Chileans a slightly modified version of the Escudero plan. They then suggested that the South American country could take the lead in publicizing their idea, with the possibility of

¹⁵ Fernandez (Embajada de Chile en Paris) al Ministro de RR.EE., 11 Setember 1948. RR.EE., "Antártico, 1939-52."

¹⁶ Embajada de Chile en Buenos Aires al Ministro de RR.EE., 21 September 1948. RR.EE., "Antártico, 1939-52."

¹⁷ Embajada Chilena en Washington al Ministro de RR.EE., November 1949. RR.EE., "Antártico, 1939-52."

convening a conference among the interested powers – explicitly excluding Belgium, South Africa, and the Soviet Union – to discuss the plan.

On 10 January 1950, the Chilean Embassy in Washington D.C. received a letter from the State Department containing revisions to the Escudero Plan.¹⁸ The plan remained largely unchanged from the one handed by Escudero to Green in 1948. State Department officials had removed references to Antarctic fisheries, considering that this was already covered in the International Whaling Convention of 1946. In addition, the North American plan suggested that an international scientific committee should be formed, consisting of one representative from each of the eight member nations. This committee would co-ordinate scientific research in Antarctica. The eight member nations would not authorize expeditions from other countries in Antarctica unless they were expressly not for the purpose of making territorial claims, they would promise to work together to protect their common interests in the zone, and they would declare themselves open to discussion of the problems of sovereignty. The State Department suggested that the Chileans could either present this project to the other six governments themselves, or the United States would take the initiative by replying to the Chilean rejection of the US proposal of internationalization of 1948 by accepting and circulating the suggestions made by the Chileans. The Chilean ambassador in Washington D.C. concluded his report to the Foreign Ministry suggesting that it looked increasingly likely that the United States would make a claim to Antarctica. Green said that he would give the Chilean Government advanced warning of any such moves. Later in the day Green

¹⁸ Embajada Chilena en Washington al Ministro de RR.EE., 10 January 1950. RR.EE., “Antártico, 1939-52.”

telephoned Rodríguez to inform him that the United States had discussed its attitude to the Antarctic question with Great Britain.¹⁹

Rodríguez, the Chilean Ambassador, was rather taken by the idea of establishing the headquarters of the international scientific committee in Santiago. The United States draft document left this invitingly vague. In a second letter to his department, Rodríguez added that from a personal point of view he thought that the US proposals were acceptable.²⁰ He favored the second option of divulgation for the ideas, that of letting the US take the lead, since this put the onus on the United States and brought a higher likelihood of success, while leaving it clear that the origins of the ideas arose in Chile. In Santiago, however, the Antarctic Commission dithered. They wanted to put Chile into the most advantageous possible position before officially launching the Escudero Plan. As the Chileans delayed over the best time to go ahead with their scheme, events elsewhere, especially in Argentina, would make their discussions largely redundant.

THE TRIPARTITE NAVAL AGREEMENT

At the same time as the United States and Chile were proposing ideas to bring the sovereignty dispute in Antarctica to a peaceful conclusion, the government of Argentina appeared to be deliberately raising the political tensions. As well as rejecting both US peace plans for Antarctica, throughout 1948, Perón increased the propaganda related to Antarctica and the *Islas Malvinas*.²¹ This increased domestic

¹⁹ Embajada de Chile en Washington al Ministro de RR.EE., 10 January 1950. "Negociaciones Antárticas." RR.EE., "Antártico, 1939-52."

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ German Vergara D. (Embajada Chilena en Buenos Aires) al Ministro de RR.EE., 27 October 1948. RR.EE., "Antartico, 1939-52."

focus on these contested regions coincided with the President's campaign to replace the Argentine constitution for the first time in almost one hundred years, in order to allow for a second consecutive presidential term. The main body responsible for the Antarctic and Malvinas propaganda campaign was the Argentine "National Committee for the Antarctic," which British diplomats reported as being "a puppet" of Doctor Pascual La Rosa, its head.²² The Committee recommended, for example, that the Argentine Central Bank should inform the Bank of England that the Falkland Islands have been removed from the list of scheduled territories since they formed part of Argentina.

From the British Embassy in Buenos Aires, Tony Lincoln wrote a letter to Robin Cecil at the Foreign Office that discussed the Argentine threat to the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies.²³ An Argentine decree had recently set up a "flame of the Argentine spirit" that would burn in Ushuaia until it could be carried to the Falkland Islands. Lincoln explained that "the preface to the decree states that hitherto it has not been practicable to carry out the Ceremony of installing the torch in the islands, and that the torch has been provisionally placed in the capital of Tierra del Fuego, awaiting its final destination." The British diplomat added that Embassy staff thought it unlikely that the Argentine government would risk a "*coup de main*" against the Falkland Islands unless Great Britain was fully extended in a distant war. Nevertheless Lincoln noted that account had to be taken of the following factors:

²² British Embassy Buenos Aires to Foreign Office, 27 October 1948. TNA, CO 537/4023.

²³ Tony Lincoln (British Embassy Buenos Aires) to Robin Cecil (Foreign Office). 20 October 1948. TNA, CO 537/4023.

- a) A belief in the justice of their claims is one conviction common to all Argentines, irrespective of class and party; it is perhaps the only reliable key to national unity.
- b) In December elections will be held for the Constituent Assembly to amend the Constitution. Both at the election and while the Assembly is sitting Perón will need all the support he can win, especially if the amendments proposed are Radical, and the economic situation continues to worsen. To announce to the Constituent Assembly that Argentine troops had landed in the Falklands would be a kind of melodrama that goes down well on their shoddy stage.
- c) The Peronist Government has conducted a Campaign on the territorial issue in the Press Radio and Schools which breaks all past records. It is just arguable that the agitation would not be sustained at its present pitch unless the Government has some concrete climax in view.
- d) We have had a report that the Argentine Army has received “sealed orders” for a general mobilization in the middle of December to coincide with the occupation of the Falkland Islands. We are investigating this report; and in the meantime pass it on with every kind of reserve.²⁴

The Naval Attaché thought that any Argentine “invasion” of the Falkland Islands themselves would take the form of a symbolic landing, complete with the “flame of the Argentine spirit.” If challenged, the force would surrender to “overwhelming opposition” and then appeal to the Pan-American Union for help against such a British act of aggression. Lincoln concluded by saying that this was not meant to be an alarmist letter but recalled “that early in 1935 many of us were convinced that the late Benito Mussolini, for whom Perón acquired in Rome more than a sneaking admiration, would have too much good sense to attack Abyssinia.” The British Embassy official advised that the commanding officer of HMS *Sparrow* should receive instructions about action to take in the “hypothetical event of an Argentine descent on the Falkland Islands.”

²⁴ Ibid.

In a radio broadcast of 7 January, 1949, to the local population, Sir Miles Clifford, the Governor of the Falkland Islands, tried to downplay the threat of an Argentine invasion of the British Crown Colony itself:

There has been, I understand, a certain measure of idle but quite natural speculation locally as to the possibility of an attack upon us by a certain neighbor which has long had very acquisitive ideas about this Colony and has in recent months been expressing them rather assertively. For myself I will say only that it is a possibility which need not cause us the loss of 5 minutes' sleep at present; I repeat at present.²⁵

Nevertheless, Clifford spoke of the need for reviving the Falklands Islands Defense Force: "we must build up our depleted numbers and we must train ourselves to handle the new weapons and to carry out the rather different role which these will impose upon us; the only role which will be of the least use if we are to put up an effective defense." In order to do this the Governor noted that the members of the Defense Force would have to increase their annual number of attendances from the customary twelve. In London, even the Foreign Office was sufficiently concerned about an Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands to request the Chiefs of Staff Committee to consider the question of sending reinforcements.²⁶

In early November 1948, the Argentine Foreign Minister Bramuglia traveled to Britain, ostensibly to discuss the future of the Anglo-Argentine economic relationship. Bramuglia was in an increasingly uncertain domestic position, due to the whims of President Perón and his wife Evita, but he continued to enjoy

²⁵ Sir Miles Clifford, Broadcast Address, 7 January 1949. RHL, MISS. Brit Emp.s 517 4/1. "Falkland Islands 1946-1957: Clifford."

²⁶ A.S. Fordham (FO) to J.S. Bennett (CO), 29 June 1949. TNA, CO 537/4940.

international prestige because of his presidency of the United Nations Security Council. In a meeting with Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Minister, the two men discussed the question of the Falkland Islands and Antarctica. Bramuglia confirmed Argentina's rejection of the US plans for internationalization and once again reaffirmed his country's claim to sovereignty over the Falkland Islands themselves. Nevertheless, a spokesman for Bramuglia added that all questions relating to the disputed islands "will always be discussed within the legal sphere because two countries as traditionally friendly as Argentina and Britain must find in the traditional way and the direct approach, the method to solve the problems in harmonious ways."²⁷ The niceties of diplomatic language contrasted sharply with the Argentine propaganda campaign against British claims to the Falkland Islands and Antarctica.

The Argentine and British Foreign Ministers went even further than mere statements of goodwill in the territorial disputes. As a demonstration of the search for "harmonious" solutions, the British and Argentine foreign Ministers agreed to avoid naval demonstrations in the Antarctic region during the coming season (1948-1949).²⁸ For Great Britain such an agreement made perfect sense. The country's armed forces were already over-stretched and the economy was in a weak position. Anything that could be done to avoid an intensification of hostilities in Antarctica without a cession of sovereignty claims was to be welcomed. British officials at the time had difficulty explaining the Argentine motivations for such an agreement, especially given the recent escalation in Antarctic and Falklands propaganda.²⁹

²⁷ Quoted in *The Standard*, 6 November 1948. "Anglo-Argentine Relations Discussed."

²⁸ *The Standard*, 8 November 1948. "Anglo-Argentine Agreement. Naval Demonstrations to be Avoided."

²⁹ Very little documentary evidence exists from the Argentine side on this agreement.

Argentina appeared to be “winning” the race for bases in Antarctica. The country was relatively prosperous, and had none of the overseas commitments demanded of the British Empire. Only the so-called “escape clause” – which allowed for “routine movements such as have been customary for a number of years” – provides any real clue as to why Argentina signed up to such an agreement. The agreement did not put an absolute prohibition on sending warships south of 60° South, and Argentine warships were accustomed to sailing to the region. The agreement therefore offered the opportunity for the Argentine government to sound conciliatory, while continuing its regular expeditions to the Antarctic Peninsula region. Tellingly, in Argentina this agreement was widely seen as recognition by Great Britain of Argentine rights to the region.³⁰

The pledge between Bramuglia and Bevin quickly developed into a tri-partite naval agreement between Britain, Argentina, and Chile, which was also endorsed by the United States. Pascual La Rosa reported to the Chilean Ambassador that the agreement had been the suggestion of Ernest Bevin.³¹ The head of the Argentine Antarctic Institute told the Chilean representative that Argentina would be keen to accept this proposal if Chile did the same. The Chilean Ambassador had the impression that Bramuglia had already informed the British Government of the Chilean acceptance of the proposal. But the Chileans – looking for ways to slow down the penetration of Antarctica – nevertheless believed that it was in the country’s best interests to sign the agreement. The United States also received the

³⁰ Christie, *The Antarctic problem; an historical and political study*. 276.

³¹ German Vergara D. (Embajada Chilena en Buenos Aires) al Ministro de RR.EE., 11 November 1948. RR.EE., “Antártico, 1939-52.”

tri-partite declaration enthusiastically, and, although it didn't sign the agreement, it did give it its full endorsement and agreed not to send warships south of 60° South.

On 30 November 1948, Great Britain, Argentina, and Chile simultaneously issued the following statement:

Being anxious to avoid any misunderstanding regarding the situation in the Antarctic which might affect the friendly relations between this country and Argentina (and Chile) H.M. Government in the UK are willing to inform the Argentine (Chilean) Government that, in present circumstances, they foresee no need to send warships south of latitude 60 degrees during the 1948-1949 Antarctic season apart, of course, from routine movements such as have been customary for a number of years.³²

This agreement would be renewed every year until the 1959, when the Antarctic Treaty would bring an effective end to direct hostilities in Antarctica. The spirit, if not the letter, of the agreement would be broken several times over the next few years as all three signatories continued to send warships to Antarctic waters. Nevertheless, the decision to sign the naval agreement in 1948 represented an important step in the sovereignty dispute, as the three parties involved agreed not to push the question to the brink. The Antarctic dispute would remain relatively constrained and the tri-partite naval agreement would be an important foundation of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty.

POLITICAL METEOROLOGY

A combination of the recently signed tripartite naval agreement and extremely cold weather combined to reduce direct political tensions in Antarctica

³² Colonial Office to Falkland Islands (Mr. M. Clifford), 17 November 1948. TNA, CO 537/4013.

during the 1948-49 Antarctic season. The three disputing countries were anxious not to break the recently signed agreement, although each of them did send “customary” warships south of 60° South. But it was the cold, as much as political idealism, that did most to prevent a recurrence of hostilities. The 1948-49 summer was the coldest for a long time, and the various national expeditions to Antarctica had their work cut out struggling against the harsh environment. Cold summers in Antarctica mean that the sea stays frozen, making transport almost impossible. The Chileans sailed around in vain looking for a place to establish a third Antarctic base, but the ice conditions prevented them from finding a suitable location.³³ The British were unable to relieve Base E, Stonington Island, and the winter party under the leadership of Dr. Vivian Fuchs had to settle in for a second year amidst the polar darkness.

During the 1948-49 season, Sir Miles Clifford, the Governor of the Falkland Islands, made what was becoming an annual “administrative” voyage to the Falkland Islands Dependencies. This expedition allowed him to see at first hand the environmental conditions, which in turn shaped his political thinking. The season had begun in tragic fashion for the British with a fire at Hope Bay (Base D) that burned down the base and resulted in the deaths of two FIDS members, O. Burd and M.C. Green. Later in the season, the British Frigate HMS *Sparrow* got stuck in the ice for several days. The British considered sending the cruiser HMS *Glasgow* to its rescue, and, since this would have been a contravention of the recently signed naval accord, the Admiralty requested that the Foreign Office get in touch with the

³³ See, for example, Sergio Labarca y Oscar Pinochet al Ministro de RR.EE., 10 February 1949. RR.EE., Antartica Chilena, “Comunicaciones Cabiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

Argentine and Chilean Embassies.³⁴ In the event, HMS *Sparrow* freed itself before HMS *Glasgow* sailed south of 60°S.

During his administrative visit, the Governor of the Falkland Islands noted that the meteorological reports from bases A, G, and E were “quite valueless” due to the tendency for local weather conditions to over-ride large scale ones. Additionally, there were problems between Survey personnel and the Navy, which was “quite inimical to the spirit of comradeship in a common enterprise which I am anxious to foster.” Clifford did not think much of Fuchs’ leadership qualities: “Fuchs is no judge of a horse; all the Leaders selected by him have without exception fallen down – Scadding, Barry, Nicoll, Platt and Laws – and of these only the last-named has produced any useful work by himself.”³⁵

A career in the Colonial Office had taught Clifford to be a political realist. In November 1948, at around the same time as the tri-partite naval agreement, a Cabinet meeting had decided against the use of violence in Antarctica.³⁶ This confirmed the limitation upon what the British could do against incursions by Argentina and Chile. “From the strategic point of view,” Clifford noted, “all we need to concern ourselves about is the Falklands, South Georgia and Deception.”³⁷ He also knew that there was an important economic bottom line to British colonies in such places as the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies: the British taxpayer was accustomed to demanding that the British Empire pay its own way. And, in the late

³⁴ Ministro de Defensa Nacional al Señor Ministro de RR.EE., 16 February 1949. RR.EE., Antártica Chilena, “Comunicaciones Cambiadas con otros Ministros, 1940-49.”

³⁵ Sir Miles Clifford’s Personal Diary, 3rd Southern Journey, 5 April 1949. SPRI, MS1507/1/11.

³⁶ A Colonial Office Official noted: “We are obliged on account of Cabinet policy to submit passively to the Argentine bases, and it follows that any continuing of activity on their part provided it is not likely to lead to local incidents must be accepted.” Carter Memo, 15 September 1948. TNA, CO 78/245/2.

³⁷ Sir Miles Clifford’s Personal Diary, 3rd Southern Journey, 16 March 1949. SPRI, MS1507/1/11.

1940s, with the British economy struggling, the Treasury was subsidizing the Falkland Islands Dependencies. In the 1948-49 season the Survey had significantly overspent its budget. Clifford realized that, in the medium term, apathy and resentment from within Great Britain posed as much of a threat to the future of the Falkland Islands Dependencies as did any South American pretensions. Following his administrative visit in the 1948-49 summer season, the Governor of the Falkland Islands resolved to put the Dependencies on a more rational administrative and economic basis.

At the center of Clifford's plan for re-organizing the Falkland Islands Dependencies was the science of meteorology. Clifford wanted to establish an effective "meteorological chain" consisting of four Antarctic bases E, F, B, and H, and South Georgia. He argued, "neither ship nor organization nor our finances can support more than four bases efficiently."³⁸ Such thoughts led to a change in the way in which the Falkland Islands Dependencies would be financed and administered. The Governor's idea would cut back the expenditure of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey so that it could be financed exclusively from taxes on the whaling industry. In a neatly circular argument Clifford reasoned that since a large part of the Dependencies' revenue came from taxes on the whaling industry, it was important that some of that tax money was put back into that industry. A string of meteorological bases would supply useful data to the whaling companies, which would help to justify the taxation. The plan would also have the advantage of

³⁸ Sir Miles Clifford's Personal Diary, 3rd Southern Journey, 6 April 1949. SPRI, MS1507/1/11. Clifford also noted that the *John Biscoe* needed to be refitted with a new bow to give it the cutting edge to get through the ice.

putting British bases in more accessible locations, so that the difficulties of re-supply suffered during the 1948-49 season were not repeated.

As the 1949-50 season approached, the Admiralty was more reluctant than ever to send more of the Navy's ships to "show the flag" in the Falkland Islands Dependencies, following the difficulties of the previous year.³⁹ They suggested to the Colonial Office that the *John Biscoe* could be commissioned and fitted with a gun to turn it from a supply ship into something more politically effective. The Colonial Office concurred that the "icing up" of one of His Majesty's ships "might cause us some embarrassment of which Argentina and Chile would not be slow to take advantage." But Colonial Office officials rejected the idea of modifying the *John Biscoe*, since it performed a vital service as a supply ship, and since "ostentatiously to arm a research vessel would be sure to invite adverse political comment, to lend color to the view that FIDS is a kind of piratical exercise, and to provoke retaliation in kind by Argentina and Chile."⁴⁰ If the Admiralty persisted with their refusal to supply a warship to the Dependencies, the Colonial Office wanted, at the very least, that the tripartite naval agreement of the 1948-49 season should be continued into the 1949-50 season. Ideally, the Colonial Office wanted to eliminate the "escape clause", which had been added to allow the Sparrow to sail south, but which also permitted the South Americans to continue with their "routine" naval operations.

British officials got much of what they wanted when the three disputing countries renewed the previous year's tripartite naval agreement along exactly the same lines in November 1949. Britain was unable to remove the "escape clause",

³⁹ Bennett (CO) to Dodds (ADM), 28 June 1949. TNA, CO 537/4940.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

but at least the agreement had been renewed. From the British perspective the Tripartite naval agreement was an expedient response to naval weakness in the region rather than an idealistic move to diffuse political tensions.⁴¹

⁴¹ “I am confining this letter to the position in the Dependencies. We note however, from paragraph 6 of your letter that in certain circumstances it might, in the Admiralty view, be impossible to send a warship South at all. This presumably means that even the Falkland Islands Colony itself would be left defenceless from the Naval point of view. The position of the Colony is quite different from that of the Dependencies. We are committed to defend it, not only in general terms because it is inhabited, but specifically by Mr. Bevin’s warning to Dr. Bramuglia last year that if the Argentine attempted anything there, there “would be hostilities”. In order not to confuse the issue, I shall be writing to you separately about the question of the availability of HM’s ships for the defence of the Colony in case of need. Meanwhile, we hope the circumstances envisaged in paragraph 6 of your letter will not arise, and we are grateful for your offer in paragraph 3 that, things being normal, a frigate should at least be maintained in the waters of the Colony (and South Georgia) during the Southern Hemisphere summer.” Bennett (CO) to Dodds (ADM), 28 June 1949. TNA, CO 537/4940.

Chapter 6: Perón's Antarctic Dream, 1950-54

The 1949-50 Antarctic summer season was the least contentious since the end of the Second World War, notable more for the on-going US-Chilean plans to resolve the territorial dispute than for any friction in Antarctica. However, as the Chileans procrastinated over the most advantageous way to take forward their “*modus vivendi*,” President Perón’s Government began to press its claims to *Antártida Argentina* with full force. By the early 1950s, several of the obstacles that stood in the way of Perón fully embracing the cause of Argentine sovereignty in the Antarctic Peninsula had been removed. Colonel Hernán Pujato, a true Antarctic visionary, arrived on the Argentine Antarctic stage and acted as a catalyst to President Perón’s emerging “Antarctic Dream.”¹ Between 1950 and 1954, the Argentine Government set about “saturating” Antarctica with Argentine bases – doing everything it could to win the sovereignty dispute against Great Britain and Chile. Perón sought to challenge the British directly at their own imperial game. The Argentines used science and the rhetoric of “mastery over nature” to demonstrate and justify their claims to Antarctica. Between 1950 and 1953, Argentina initiated a systematic program of scientific study of the southern continent. This program resonated with other Peronist schemes to demonstrate Argentina’s scientific modernity. For a while this strategy appeared to be close to achieving its goal and Argentina became, by many indicators, the leading scientific power in Antarctica.

¹ The idea of an “Antarctic Dream” comes from Tomás Eloy Martínez, *The Perón novel*, 1st American ed. (New York, 1988).

In Britain, the Conservative Government of Winston Churchill, which was elected in October 1951, responded to renewed Argentine aggression in Antarctica with a much tougher line than the previous Labour administration. Despite the attempts by Sir Miles Clifford and others to scale back and rationalize the British presence in the Falkland Islands Dependencies, there was a general feeling that Perón's challenge to British sovereignty had to be met head on. Meanwhile, because of the Korean War, the United States had largely lost interest in Antarctica, and during the first half of the 1950s there were no US expeditions.² This removed one of the most important steadying influences on Antarctic politics. The stage was set for a period of intense territorial rivalry in Antarctica which saw the first shots ever fired in anger on the Southern Continent, and also saw the navies of Chile and Argentina mobilized for war against Great Britain.

“THE FIRST ARGENTINE SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION TO ANTARCTICA”

President Juan Domingo Perón's interest in Antarctica had begun rather ambivalently following his election in 1946.³ In one sense, the assertion of Argentine rights to Antarctic dominion, especially set against Britain's colonial claims, fitted neatly into his broader nationalist agenda and with his campaign against British economic “imperialism” in Argentina, and between 1946 and 1950 Perón had given his support to Argentine expeditions to the Southern Continent and the construction of bases there. But this support remained lukewarm and relatively

² For a detailed discussion of US Antarctic Policy at the beginning of this period, see Policy Statement Polar Regions (Secret) Department of State, 1 July 1951. USNA 702.022/7-151. US policy, however, was never really settled. For evidence of the Korean War's negative affect on US Antarctic expeditions see, S.W. Boggs (OIR/GE) to Mr. Ronhovde (BNA), 12 June 1953. USNA 702.022/6-1253.

³ See Chapter 3.

distant.⁴ Two important factors prevented Perón from fully embracing the cause of Argentine Antarctica during the late 1940s. Firstly, the dominant role of the Navy put the President in an awkward situation. While Perón, as a former colonel in the mountain regiment, had largely won over the Army, the Argentine Navy was the national institution most critical of the President and it remained a threat to the President's position.⁵ Any prestige acquired by Argentine activity in the Southern Continent went as much to the Navy as to Perón himself. A second obstacle to an all-out Argentine assault on Antarctica was the lingering importance of the economic relationship with Great Britain. Throughout the 1940s, the Argentine economy continued to rely upon agricultural exports to Great Britain, and the territorial conflicts in the *Islas Malvinas* and Antarctica could not be allowed to jeopardize these exports.

By the end of the 1940s, however, domestic and international circumstances were changing, and the obstacles in the way of a Peronist Antarctic policy were no longer so pressing. The tripartite naval agreement with Great Britain and Chile, signed in 1948 and renewed in subsequent years, effectively froze the number of naval ships that could sail to Antarctica at the level of the 1947-48 season. Whether by accident or design, this agreement weakened the Argentine Navy's position in Antarctic affairs. The 1948-49 and 1949-50 summers had seen no increase in the Navy's activity in Antarctica, and the prospect of a rapidly increasing naval presence was ended. The second factor that changed Perón's attitude towards the Southern Continent was the decline of the Anglo-Argentine economic relationship. By 1950,

⁴ For example, Perón had not attended the "National Antarctic Day" celebrations held in Buenos Aires in 1948. Argentine Republic. Comisión Nacional del Antártico, *Soberanía argentina en la Antártida. Nota preliminar del Presidente de la Nación, Juan Perón.*

⁵ Potash, *The army & politics in Argentina.*

the policies of Perón's government had largely "broken the chains" of Argentina's economic dependence upon Great Britain.⁶ By 1951, Britain had fallen to being only Argentina's eleventh largest trading partner, and many British industries in Argentina – most notably the railways – had been sold or nationalized.⁷ Whereas in the past the Anglo-Argentine economic relationship had acted as a brake on any territorial conflict, by the early 1950s, this constraint had largely ceased to exist.

The catalyst for Perón's embrace of the "Antarctic Dream" came quite unexpectedly during a state visit to Bolivia in 1949. In La Paz, Perón met Colonel Hernán Pujato, the Argentine military attaché. Hernán Pujato shared a similar background to President Perón: both, for example, had served as officers in the army's mountain division. While Perón had been furthering his political ambitions, Pujato had become fascinated by Antarctica, and by the idea of Argentine sovereignty in the Southern Continent. Pujato was a true Antarctic visionary in the same league as Admiral Byrd and Ramón Cañas Montalva. He envisioned Antarctica as a fundamental part of Argentina's national territory and believed that the continent offered quasi-mystical possibilities for the regeneration of the Argentine nation.⁸ During the Presidential visit to Bolivia, Pujato presented Perón with a five-point plan for furthering Argentina's presence in Antarctica, which included detailed plans for an army expedition to the Southern Continent and the establishment of permanent colonies of settlement.⁹ This plan offered the President a

⁶ Argentine nationalist authors had referred to the economic relationship in terms of "chains." See, for example, Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz, *Política británica en el río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires, 1940).

⁷ Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987: from Spanish colonization to the Falklands War and Alfonsín*.

⁸ Similar to some of the ideas expressed by the North American Admiral Byrd. See, for example, Griffiths, *Slicing the silence: voyaging to Antarctica*.

⁹ At the beginning of the 1950s, there were several "crazy" schemes for establishing settler colonies in Antarctica. The Antarctic Colony Associates, for example, based in Jacksonville, Florida, wanted to take the North American pioneering spirit to the southern continent, in order to establish claims for

ready-made formula for advancing Argentine interests in Antarctica, while at the same time breaking the Navy's monopoly.

Upon his return to Argentina, Perón set about putting Pujato's ideas into action. The two men faced stubborn resistance from the military establishment, particularly the Navy, and the first vote on Pujato's plans was defeated. Nevertheless, in typical Peronist fashion, the preparations continued and moves were made to by-pass any obstructions. In a maneuver that mirrored his tactics in other areas of national life, Perón created a whole new administrative body for Antarctic affairs – the Instituto Antártico Argentino – and then favored this organization with patronage. The Institute was given the full name “Instituto Antártico Argentino ‘Colonel Hernán Pujato’” and for the next five years the Argentine Army, under the leadership of Hernán Pujato, would dominate the Argentine expeditions to Antarctica.

Pujato traveled to Alaska to take part in a US-army cold weather training program. When he returned to Argentina he brought back sixty husky dogs and sledging equipment, paid for by a fortuitous personal win in the Argentine lottery.¹⁰ In the winter of 1950 Pujato ran a training program in the Andean mountains. This ended in tragedy when two men got lost in the snow and died from exposure. The

the United States. “According to George Gamow (*Biography of the Earth*, pages 141, 144, 185, etc) and others,” they reasoned, “average earth temperatures are moving steadily up toward a high level similar to that which permitted rich growths of vegetation responsible for coal deposits on the Antarctic continent. It is apparently obvious to many nations that now is the time to establish claims to this continent which is gradually moving toward weather conditions more favorable for human habitation. There is a remote possibility that a technical program might be developed for hastening the process of glacial retreat around colony sites.” Antarctic Colony Associates (Jacksonville, Florida) to Dean Acheson, 7 July 1950. USNA, 702.022/7-750. See also, Office Memorandum from Boggs (OIR/GE) to Hulley (BNA), 1 September 1950. USNA, 702.022/9-150.

¹⁰ In June 1951, Clifford sent word to the Secretary of State for Colonies that the Argentines had established a base at Marguerite Bay and were contemplating sledging. From Falkland Islands (Sir M. Clifford) to S of S for Colonies, 19 June 1951. TNA, CO 537/7429.

biggest obstacle faced by the expedition was the fact the Navy refused to supply a ship, hoping that this would put an end to the idea. But Perón and Pujato simply chartered a ship, the *Santa Micaela*, and circumvented the Navy's hostility. In a move undoubtedly intended to belittle the Navy's achievements in Antarctica, Pujato's expedition was named "The First Argentine Scientific Expedition to Antarctica."¹¹ Such a title bought into the growing rhetoric that connected science and politics in Antarctica by implying that previous naval expeditions had lacked scientific substance.

On 12 February 1951, the *Santa Micaela* set sail from Buenos Aires en route to Antarctica. The Second Secretary of the US Embassy described the departure as taking place "with all possible fanfare and publicity."¹² "The affair," he reported, "received more newspaper space, including photographs, than the Queen of Carnival, proclaimed the day before, who thus saw herself relegated to the position of runner-up in the national news." But there was also a more threatening tone to the official send off. President Perón spoke in language described by the American diplomat as "fight talk," although the aggression was perhaps directed into scientific fields: "even the plain-spoken threat of the eventual use of force in the area is probably to be considered as made in the interests of science." The Second Secretary concluded his report by making clear the importance given by Perón to the Antarctic:

¹¹ Perón's obvious hostility towards the Navy was not lost on the United States diplomat who watched the departure of the *Santa Micaela*: President Perón expressly thanked Perez Companac S.A. for the loan of a LST, so that it might be clear to all that the ship in question was not the property of the Navy." US Embassy Buenos Aires (Franklin 2nd Sec) to Department of State, 14 Feb 1951. USNA, 702.022/2-1451.

¹² Ibid.

The first Order of the Day was signed by the President, and referred to “inalienable rights of sovereignty permanently proclaimed before the world.” And stated that the scientific mission was necessitated by the need for information concerning the region “necessary for adequate government action.” The differences between this expedition and such disinterested scientific expeditions as have visited the poles for the purpose of meteorological and other research of value to the race in general was thus clearly established.¹³

The rhetoric of Peronism, the American diplomat realized, was rapidly attempting to make Antarctic science serve Argentine – and specifically Peronist – politics.

The *Santa Micaela* arrived at Marguerite Bay in the far south of the Peninsula two weeks after leaving Buenos Aires. The sea ice conditions were sufficiently benign to allow a safe passage, but the journey was not without incident: Fontana, one of the members of the wintering party, injured himself while unloading the ship and had to return. The “First Argentine Scientific Expedition” rapidly constructed Base San Martín – named after the Army’s hero in the independence wars – across the bay from the recently abandoned British Base at Stonington Island and the remains of the US East Base.¹⁴

Perón’s newfound enthusiasm for Antarctica put a serious stumbling block in the way of a peaceful solution to the problem along the lines proposed by Chile’s *modus vivendi*.¹⁵ In the middle of 1951, the Chilean Ambassador in Buenos Aires sent an insightful report on the developing Argentine Antarctic policy to the Foreign Ministry in Santiago that noted that instability rather than stability characterized the

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Which had been the scene such intrigue in the 1946-47 Antarctic summer season. See Chapter 3.

¹⁵ US diplomats and others realized that Argentina had its own distinct objectives. See, State Department Memorandum (Hilliker – BNA), 20 September 1950. USNA 702.022/9-2050. Also see Policy Statement Polar Regions (Secret) Department of State, 1 July 1951. USNA 702.022/7-151.

Argentine policy in Antarctica.¹⁶ The Chilean ambassador thought it very likely that the Argentine government would be keen to re-open bi-lateral negotiations on the future of Antarctica, although he thought it less likely that the two countries would be able to reach agreement on their respective boundaries in the far south. As the Argentines strongly pushed their claims to sovereignty in Antarctica, the fundamental problems in the idea of a “South American Antarctica” re-emerged. Perón was happy to work alongside the Chileans in the pursuit of his Antarctic Dream, but he always wanted to be the senior partner in this relationship, and he could not accept any form of territorial concession.

HOPE BAY

On 25 October 1951, Winston Churchill’s Conservative Party won the British general election and returned to power. The new government upheld the Cabinet decision taken in March 1951 to expand the level of British activity in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. The Tories were more inclined than the Labour Party to defend British sovereignty in the Falkland Islands Dependencies as a matter of principle, fearing the bad precedent that would be set by a passive acceptance of the Latin American “trespass.”¹⁷ While in opposition, Conservative MPs had repeatedly attacked Labour’s “soft” position in the Dependencies.¹⁸ Responsibility for

¹⁶ Embajada de Chile en Buenos Aires al Ministro de RR.EE., 31 July 1951. RR.EE., Antartico, 1939-52.

¹⁷ The idea of a bad precedent had been around for a while. In February 1951, for example, a Colonial Office brief had noted: “The FO are concerned because of international interest in the Antarctic generally and, in particular, the Argentinian and Chilean claims and also because of the possible repercussions on territorial claims elsewhere... Since the territories are uninhabited it is only necessary to consider the interests of the UK.” FIDS: Draft Brief(s) for the Secretary of State for Colonies. 23 February 1951. TNA, CO 537/7433.

¹⁸ See, for example, *La Unión*, 5 April 1951. “Se planteo en los comunes el caso de la Antártica.” In discussing British Antarctic policy with the Admiralty, one Foreign Office Official stated, “there is

defending the Falkland Islands Dependencies fell to Alan Lennox Boyd, Churchill's choice as Secretary of State for the Colonies. Lennox Boyd was an imperialist of the old school.¹⁹ Although he was sufficiently pragmatic to understand that the times were changing with regards to much of the colonial empire, he had no intention of succumbing to Argentine or Chilean aggression in Britain's Antarctic territories.

Upon taking up his position as Secretary of State at the Colonial Office, Lennox Boyd inquired about "the possibility of using more forceful measures against Argentine and Chilean encroachments in the Falkland Islands Dependencies."²⁰ Although no naval vessel could be spared exclusively for the use of the Falkland Islands Dependencies, the Admiralty conceded that a frigate could be sent south of 60°S, in order to show the flag at Deception Island and possibly Laurie Island.²¹ Sir Thomas Lloyd informed Lennox Boyd of the constraints on the Colonial Office position:

There could, as I see it, be no hope of persuading the Admiralty to send to the Antarctic now, or in the near future, a naval force of the size that would be required if H.M.G. are to take a stronger line over this and by public gesture to show that that is their intention. The Admiralty attitude of a few months ago... is not likely since to have changed.²²

currently a good deal of agitation in Parliament on this subject." Maclean (FO) to Newell (ADM), 30 April 1951. TNA, CO 537/7433.

¹⁹ Philip Murphy, *Alan Lennox-Boyd: a biography* (London, 1999).

²⁰ Martin memo (to T. Lloyd), 13 November 1951. TNA, CO 537/7431.

²¹ At the Colonial Office, Carter had earlier raised the question of formal protests at Argentine bases: "Do we want protests delivered at Deception Island and Signy? I think the answer is Deception Island, yes; Signy (includes Laurie Island), no because we recognize the strength of the Argentine Title there..." Carter memo. 25 September 1951. TNA, CO 537/7431.

²² Thomas Lloyd memo, 3 December 1951. TNA, CO 537/7429.

He added that the Foreign Office had just renewed the tripartite Naval Agreement, which provided “another argument against more forceful measures now.” Nevertheless, the new Conservative Government implemented the newly changed policy of re-building bases on the mainland and the decision was taken to re-build Hope Bay on the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, which had been evacuated after burning down at the beginning of the 1948-49 season.

In January 1951 a party from the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey sailed to Hope Bay on the northwest coast of the Antarctic Peninsula with instructions to re-build the British Base. However, when they arrived they found that the Argentines were already there. On 31 January, Sir Miles Clifford received word from Elliott, the leader of the FIDS party, that the Argentines were on shore building huts 400 yards west of the former British base.²³ The Falklands Governor ordered the British party to proceed with the re-building of the British base, in accordance with his orders. Clifford also directed Elliot to make a protest to the leader of the Argentine party. In a telegram to the Colonial Secretary, Clifford complained:

As stated in earlier correspondence, Argentina, with close proximity to Antarctica and apparently unlimited call on armed services, are able to match us base for base, wherever we may be installed, and it is clearly their intention to do so. It is for consideration as to what extent we can continue this unprofitable and expensive competition with Argentine escort vessels.²⁴

The Governor had been responsible, in large part, for Britain’s retreat from the Antarctic mainland over the previous two seasons. Indeed, he had specifically made

²³ Falkland Islands (Sir M. Clifford) to Secretary of State for Colonies, 31 January 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

²⁴ Ibid.

a case against Hope Bay as one of the least scientifically useful bases. Clifford now found himself implementing a policy that he had strongly argued against. Nevertheless, his experiences in various parts of the Colonial Empire had prepared him for acting authoritatively, and, faced with a direct Argentine challenge, the “man on the spot” did not consider backing down.

The Argentine decision to build a hut on Hope Bay was part of Perón’s broader policy of constructing bases throughout *Antártida Argentina*. The Argentine Government knew about Britain’s intention of re-building their base at Hope Bay and decided to get there first.²⁵ As early as late December 1951, the British Embassy in Buenos Aires reported that knowledge of British projects to re-establish bases at Hope Bay and Marguerite Bay was “public property” in Argentina, despite the fact that both the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office treated the plans as secret.²⁶ After the incident, the Foreign Office clearly blamed the Falkland Islands’ Government for the security leaks.²⁷ The Colonial Office put the leak down to a newspaper report following the departure of the *John Biscoe* from Southampton in October.²⁸

In the morning of 1 February, Elliott landed the first load of stores in compliance with Clifford’s instructions to proceed with the building of the hut.²⁹

²⁵ A Foreign Office official noted, “It looks very much as if the Argentines knowing of our intention to reestablish the base at Hope Bay made sure to be there before the British party. Dr. Roberts minute on A15211/2 has a considerable bearing on this matter. I think we should point out to the CO that he might better be able to forestall the Argentines if the security of our plans were improved. It is unlikely that there is a leak in London, as I know the CO as well as ourselves, treated the plans as secret until a late date.” Anstee (FO), Minute, 5 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

²⁶ Reported in Foreign Office Out File Draft Letter to Colonial Office, 8 February, 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ From Colonial Office to Foreign Office (Cecil), 15 February 1952. TNA FO 371/97375.

²⁹ From Falkland Islands (Sir Miles Clifford) to Secretary of State for Colonies, 1 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

The leader of the Argentine party informed Elliott that his commanders had instructed him to prevent the building of a British base, using force if necessary. Undeterred, the British continued with their activities. Johnson, the Master of *John Biscoe*, immediately sent a message to Clifford explaining what happened next:

At noon a few bursts of machine gun fire were fired over our shore party's heads and Argentines, armed with rifles, commenced surrounding base party. At 1400, armed Argentines closed our party and ordered us into their launch, which came to our landing beach. Our party obeyed Argentine officer's cocked pistol and are now all on board. Have now received official protest that any further attempt at landing stores will be fired on. Request instructions.³⁰

With the unarmed British party huddled on board *John Biscoe*, the Argentine naval tanker *Punta Ninfas* sailed into the Bay to join the *Buen Suceso* and add further pressure to the British position. Clifford forwarded the message to the Colonial Secretary, asking for immediate directions, and stating, "this presumably constitutes act of war."³¹ Clifford believed that the Argentine Government had ordered the aggression. He informed Lennox Boyd that the Naval Vessel HMS *Burghead Bay* was due in Stanley the following day, and suggested that military personnel should proceed at once to the scene of the incident in order to provide armed cover for the construction of the base.

In Buenos Aires, the Argentine Foreign Ministry informed the British Embassy of what had happened at Hope Bay.³² The Argentine government

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Buenos Aires to Foreign Office, 2 February 1952. TNA, FO371/97375. The explanation given to the British Embassy was the same as that given by the Argentine Government to its own Antarctic Commission several days later.

explained that the “action taken was in error and due to over-literal interpretation by Commander of his instructions to prevent by force landing of civilians but not of naval or military personnel, though in each case formal protest was to be made.” They added that these instructions had been intended against countries that were not part of the tripartite naval agreement between Argentina, Britain, and Chile, claiming “they had not anticipated landing of civilian personnel from ‘British Naval Auxiliary.’” The Argentine government concluded its explanation by stating: “Instructions to Argentine Commander have been rectified but Argentine Government state that this should not be regarded as modifying in any way their attitude with respect to sovereignty over these territories.”

The British Ambassador in Buenos Aires believed the Argentine government’s explanation: “I am convinced that the action of the Argentine commander was taken in all good faith and that explanation offered by the Argentine Government reflects genuine concern to avoid any steps actually hostile or offensive to HMG.”³³ In a more detailed explanation sent to the Foreign Office the following day, Richard Allen wrote that he had been summoned in the evening to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where he met with the Minister and Under-Secretary together with the Minister of Marine.³⁴ The Argentine Ministers had just returned from a meeting with Perón and they were “obviously worried and anxious to smooth matters over as completely as possible.” Although Allen repeated that he was sure there could have been nothing premeditated in what happened, he added:

³³ Buenos Aires to Foreign Office, 2 February 1952. TNA, FO371/97375.

³⁴ Richard Allen (British Embassy, BA) to Robin Cecil, American Department, FO, 2 February 1952. TNA, FO371/97375

This is of some significance since rumours have been floating around here all this week that Perón might be going to attempt something sensational and silly in the South to distract attention from his internal troubles. According to the rumours, this was possibly to have been some kind of a *coup* against the Falkland Islands; or some new “act of sovereignty” in the Dependencies; or some move to alter the present status in the Magellan Straits.³⁵

As of yet, Allen reported, there was nothing in the news about the Hope Bay incident, although, he added, it was too much to hope that this would last.³⁶

In the Falkland Islands, Clifford did not believe the protestations of innocence made by the Argentine Government.³⁷ On the day after the incident, Johnson sent word from the *John Biscoe* that the Argentines had returned some of the stores and informed the British verbally that they would fire on any attempted landing.³⁸ Later that day, however, the senior Argentine naval officer boarded the British ship and apologized for “action taken prematurely.”³⁹ Despite the limited Argentine concessions, the Governor continued to urge a robust response to the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ On the following day the Chilean press were reported the incident. *La Union*, 3 February 1952. On the same day in Argentina Richard Allen reported: “The story was published in the English language newspapers here this morning in the form of reports from Port Stanley which had reached Reuters, A.P. and U.P.. Of the Spanish papers only the independent “Nación” carries the story. None of the government, or government influenced papers have anything about the incident at all, although each of them subscribes to at least one of these agencies.” The reports given out by the Government in Port Stanley suggested that it was the British Embassy in Buenos Aires that approached the Argentine Foreign Ministry, whereas, as Allen pointed out “it was of course the Argentines – to do them justice – who took the first step themselves and weighed in with what amounted to an apology before we had heard anything about the incident.” Richard Allen (British Embassy, BA) to Robin Cecil (American Department, FO), 3 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

³⁷ For example, Clifford wrote, “I do not (repeat not) share the generous interpretation quoted in (your) Fidep No.12 in reference to the mendacious and evasive explanation from Buenos Aires...” Clifford to Secretary of State for Colonies, 2 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375. This disbelief of Argentine motives became even more pronounced when Clifford arrived in the Dependencies on board HMS *Burghead Bay*. See, Governor to Secretary of State for Colonies, 5 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

³⁸ Falkland Islands (Clifford) to Secretary of State for Colonies, 2 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

³⁹ Ibid.

Argentine aggression. He argued that something forceful needed to be done to restore the morale of the FIDS personnel, and to make sure that no such Argentine action of this sort would take place again.⁴⁰ Following discussions with the Admiralty in London, Lennox Boyd agreed that, if ice conditions permitted, HMS *Burghead Bay* should sail to Hope Bay in order to oversee the construction of the base.⁴¹ Noting the peaceful course the incident seemed to be taking, the Colonial Secretary did not think it necessary, or even desirable, that Clifford should accompany the expedition, although he conceded that his Governor could sail south if he absolutely wished. As the man on the spot, Clifford had no intention of being left behind, and he quickly made preparations for one of his customary administrative visits to the Dependencies.⁴²

The Commander in Chief of the British Navy's Americas and West Indies Station sent the Captain of HMS *Burghead Bay* his full approval "to act as the situation demands."⁴³ The frigate sailed to Hope Bay with Clifford on board. Under the protection of the guns of HMS *Burghead Bay* the FIDS party re-built the British hut, while the Governor of the Falkland Islands prudently maintained a low profile.⁴⁴ There was no further incident. A small British party settled in for a long winter, next door to the Argentine party. The Argentine hut was manned by a Commanding

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Secretary of State for Colonies to Falkland Islands (Clifford), 2 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

⁴² Clifford to SoS Colonies, 4th February 1952. TNA, FO371/97375. Justifying his decision he wrote: "My departure on BURGHEAD BAY dictated by a) recognition of the necessity for re-establishing base in whatever circumstances. b) My personal duty to support expedition for which I am responsible."

⁴³ Commander in Chief America and West Indies to BURGHEAD BAY, 2 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

⁴⁴ Officer Administering the Government (FIDS) to Secretary of State for Colonies, 22 August 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

Officer, a civilian doctor, and three men. The British base leader believed that all radio communications were being reported to Buenos Aires, but all communications of a “Secret” or “Confidential” nature were passed in cypher.

At a diplomatic level, the Foreign Office instructed the British Ambassador to make a formal protest to the Argentine Government.⁴⁵ On receiving the protest note, the Minister of Foreign Relations fell back on racial stereotypes: “His countrymen,” he explained, “as Latins, were liable to be a bit emotional and hot-headed.”⁴⁶ He hoped that the British would take this into account and do everything possible to dampen down the publicity surrounding the incident, adding that he did not want this to become an international dispute. In fact, both sides were anxious to play down the incident.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the British Embassy reported that strong rumors circulated among journalists in Buenos Aires that “six to eight British warships are in Antarctic waters one of which has removed by force 4 Argentines from Gamma Island, Palmer Archipelago.”⁴⁸ The Embassy suggested that the BBC should issue an early denial of these stories. In England, news of the King’s death caused the Hope Bay incident to drop entirely from the British papers, and the Foreign Office did not want to re-open the incident by making such a public statement.⁴⁹

Despite being informed by the Colonial Office that his claims could not be substantiated, Clifford continued to believe that the actions taken by the Argentines at Hope Bay were pre-meditated: “I cannot escape the conclusion that they thought

⁴⁵ Foreign Office to Buenos Aires, 3 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

⁴⁶ Buenos Aires to Foreign Office, 4 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

⁴⁷ Foreign Office to Buenos Aires, 5 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

⁴⁸ Buenos Aires to Foreign Office, 6 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

⁴⁹ Foreign Office to Buenos Aires, 7 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

that this display of force would bluff us into withdrawal, which, happily, it failed to do.”⁵⁰ In the immediate aftermath of the Hope Bay incident, the Colonial Official reluctantly considered arming British personnel in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. In a letter to the Foreign Office, Bennett discussed the potential for an armed raid on a British base over the course of the long Antarctic winter, noting that “Even if these risks are unlikely to materialize, we are bound now to consider the morale effect of the Hope Bay incident on our civilian parties, of being expected to maintain our position alongside potentially trigger-happy South Americans.”⁵¹ Bennett conceded that arming civilian parties was not a favorable option since “the whole purpose and character of the operation is a civilian one,” adding: “Weapons do not go with either scientific exploration or with civil administration.” He preferred that the South American parties be disarmed, although he made clear that “I do not of course suggest that we should do this ourselves, as at Ismailia.” Bennett’s suggestion was that some sort of agreement should be reached between the three disputing parties along the lines of the tri-partite naval accord, that they should not carry weapons in Antarctica, beyond what was reasonable for harmless purposes such as shooting seals for dog food. Cecil replied to Bennett, saying that the Foreign Office opposed this suggestion because they felt that there was no possibility of the Argentines agreeing to this: “It would be unlike the proud and sensitive Argentines to allow members of their armed forces to be deprived of their arms at our

⁵⁰ Governor to Colonial Office, 16 May 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375

⁵¹ J.S. Bennett (CO) to Cecil (FO), 5 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375. At the end of the letter Bennett added the caveat: “This letter is simply an idea which has occurred to us in the Department and carries no higher authority here at present. I put it forward for you to shoot at and should be interested to have your reactions.”

suggestion.”⁵² Cecil also noted that the situation would be made even more difficult if the British made this suggestion and then the Argentines rejected it.

The Hope Bay incident set a tone of suspicion and hostility that persisted throughout 1952.⁵³ When the Argentine Naval personnel involved in the dispute returned to Argentina, President Perón met them with a hero’s welcome at a luncheon in their honor at the Naval Engineering School. In a tacit reference to the Hope Bay incident, the Argentine President proclaimed:

Soldiers and sailors when they are carrying out so sacred a duty as that of serving their country are permitted to err through displaying too much energy, but they are never permitted to err by displaying too much weakness. For this reason the attitude of these sailors of Hope Bay can be an example for every Argentine who wishes to inspire himself with the articles of faith of men of arms whose attitude is only despicable when they do not comply energetically with their duty.⁵⁴

The British Embassy in Buenos Aires reported the speech with great annoyance: “Unfortunately the Minister of Marine and the President of the Republic have recently chosen gratuitously to revive this matter in a manner which could hardly fail

⁵² Cecil (CO) to Bennett (FO), 14 March 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

⁵³ For example, the United States and Chile realized that they would not be able to get the Argentines to approve their *modus vivendi*. However, Argentine Naval authorities, the British naval attaché in Buenos Aires reported, attempted to distance themselves from the political tensions generated by Perón’s policies: “Increasing friendliness of the Argentine Naval authorities, particularly D.N.I. at private dinner at my home, convinced me that the Naval attitude of regarding the Antarctic as political matter which should not be allowed to interfere with the traditional friendship of the sea, and between Navies, is entirely genuine. Other service Attachés are being partially or wholly boycotted particularly United States Military Attaché and Air Attaché.” Buenos Aires to Foreign Office, 5 February 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

⁵⁴ British Diplomats noted: “These statements, although worded in very general terms, refer to congratulations from the President to the Commander of the Task Force at the time of ‘difficult circumstances for his command’ in February – circumstances, in which the latter took an ‘energetic’ decision in a matter concerning Argentine national rights and sovereignty, a decision which was ‘appreciated by the Military talents of the Supreme Commander’, i.e. the President.” British Embassy Buenos Aires to Foreign Office, 3 May 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

to appear discourteous to HMG.” After the speech, Mack, the British Ambassador, went to see Dr. Remorino, the Minister of Foreign Relations, in order to protest. The Minister informed him that: “They [the President’s remarks] could only have been meant to congratulate the Task Force on the whole course of their labors and especially on the useful scientific work which they had courageously accomplished, with extremely restricted means, during their three months stay in Hope Bay.” In London, the Foreign Office did not believe Remorino’s explanation. In a Foreign Office minute Cecil noted “I think that Sir H. Mack should not let Perón forget that we dislike the blatant manner in which the Argentines have cast doubt on the sincerity of their own earlier apology.”⁵⁵

Even greater fanfare and propaganda greeted the return of Hernán Pujato to Argentina after an entire year spent at Base San Martín in the far south of the Antarctic Peninsula.⁵⁶ The head of the Argentine Antarctic Institute, gave a speech about his experiences in southern continent. After the speech Perón awarded Peronist Medals to the recently promoted General and his men. When questioned by the *Mundo Peronista* magazine about his most memorable experience in Antarctica, Pujato dutifully replied that it was when he and his men had cast their votes for Perón in the 1951 election: “eight *criollo* hearts, eight Peronist votes.”⁵⁷ Loosened from the grip of his rivals in the Navy, President Perón was now at liberty to extract maximum possible propaganda value from Argentina’s exploits in Antarctica.

⁵⁵ R.Cecil, Minute concerning speech made by Perón, 20 May 1952. TNA, FO 371/97375.

⁵⁶ Argentine News Agency (Official), 11 May 1952. TNA, FO371/97375.

⁵⁷ *Mundo Peronista*, 15 May 1952.

DECEPTION ISLAND

The British Conservative Government responded to the aggression at Hope Bay and to the growing crescendo of Argentine Antarctic propaganda by redoubling their determination to resist South American incursions in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. Indeed, the Hope Bay incident served to reawaken concern about Antarctica at a time when the Admiralty and the Colonial Office had been losing interest in the region. Shortly after the Argentine aggression at Hope Bay, Churchill decided that a naval frigate should be made available for a standing naval patrol in Antarctic waters during the Antarctic season.⁵⁸ The Foreign Office strongly supported the “indefinite application” of this decision, although they noted:

The deterrent effect on the aggressiveness of individual Argentine commanders which we hope to derive from the stationing of a frigate in Falkland Island Waters, will be much reduced in relation to bases situated beyond its southward range in a normal Antarctic season. I do not wish to propose a serious limitation of the FIDS program for next year, but the complications of the Hope Bay incident certainly merit further study.⁵⁹

The Antarctic environment continued to play an important role in the development of the sovereignty dispute, as the sea-ice conditions influenced the decision making over the location of bases and activities in the region.

Some sense of the hardening British position towards the Falkland Islands Dependencies reached the South Americans. In both Buenos Aires and Santiago, the respective Antarctic Commissions discussed the forthright British response to the Argentine action in Hope Bay and the increasingly angry tone of the subsequent

⁵⁸ Cecil (FO) to Bennett (CO), 14 March 1952. TNA, FO371/97375.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

diplomatic exchanges. But this did nothing to persuade either the Argentines or the Chileans to reduce their activities in Antarctica. In September 1952, Ibañez had won the Chilean Presidential election. He was immediately courted by Perón and it appeared that a new era of Argentine-Chilean relations was beginning. The Pan-South Americanism envisioned by Perón stretched all the way to “South American Antarctica.” Early in the 1952-53 Antarctic season both South American countries constructed new bases on Deception Island, which was by far the most strategically useful island in the region due to its naturally protected deepwater harbor.⁶⁰ For the Argentines this was their second base on the island; for the Chileans it was their first. In a deliberately provocative move both of these bases were built alongside the airfield that the British used for reconnaissance flights.⁶¹

The construction of these two new bases offered the British an opportunity to put into practice their new hard-line approach towards South American “trespass” in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. In February 1953, the frigate HMS *Snipe* sailed to Deception Island. Armed British marines landed at the airfield. The Chilean hut was deserted, but two soldiers were in the Argentine hut. The marines proceeded to demolish both huts and arrest the two Argentines, who were charged under Falkland Islands civilian law with “trespassing” on British territory.⁶² The Argentine soldiers were taken to the Falkland Islands, from where they were returned to Argentina.

⁶⁰ United States Embassy Buenos Aires to Department of State. 23 February 1953. USNA, 702.022/2-2353.

⁶¹ This runway had been established by Sir Herbert Wilkins in 1928. Ibid.

⁶² The United States Embassy in Buenos Aires pointed out that since the two Argentines were in military uniform they were technically military “aggressors,” and could therefore have been dealt with under military law. United States Embassy Buenos Aires to Department of State, 23 February 1953. USNA, 702.022/2-2353.

Immediately after the incident, the British informed the Argentines what had happened. The Argentine Government had agreed with the British to keep the incident quiet, but probing by the Buenos Aires correspondent of the *New York Times* soon made public what had happened, and forced the British Foreign Office to make a statement.⁶³ The Chileans first heard of the demolition of their hut through these news reports and not from the British themselves.⁶⁴ This did nothing to improve the state of rapidly fracturing Anglo-Chilean relations. Both Chile and Argentina considered requesting the withdrawal of the respective British Ambassadors, although this did not happen.⁶⁵ The US Ambassador, Claude Bowers, analyzed the incident for the State Department:

Great Britain could not have chosen a more inopportune time for action on Deception Island. On some other occasion it would have been relatively easy to placate Chile but not in the face of the Congressional election and visit of Perón. Latter of course given new note to sound on Falklands drum which under any circumstances he would make most of. Now GB gives Perón wonderful opportunity express more convincing reasons why Chile should side with his country.⁶⁶

⁶³ United States Embassy Buenos Aires, to Secretary of State, 22 February 1953. USNA, 702.022/2-2253. The *New York Times* article of 20 February 1953 actually cites Reuters as the source of this story: “British Dismantle Disputed Argentine Base in Antarctic After Expelling 2 Perón Men.”

⁶⁴ United States Embassy Santiago (Bowers) to Secretary of State. 22 February 1953. USNA, 702.022/2-2153. The British defended themselves by saying that they had to go public with the story since an exaggerated version of the incident was developing.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* It helped that the British ambassador in Chile was away from Santiago – fishing in Patagonia – at the time when the story broke.

⁶⁶ US Embassy Santiago (Bowers) to Secretary of State. 22 February 1953. USNA, 702.022/2-21533. Bowers noted that the Canadian ambassador also thought that Great Britain had “really put its foot in it.” The US Embassy in Buenos Aires added that the incident gave Argentina an excellent opportunity to “be protector of South American interests.” United States Embassy Buenos Aires to Secretary of State. 23 February 1953. USNA 702.022/2-2353.

President Perón happened to be in Santiago on the day when the news of the incident broke. Both Perón and Ibañez demanded that Britain rebuild the huts and issue a formal apology to their two countries.⁶⁷ On February 21, *El Diario Ilustrado* of Santiago published the Chilean protest notes handed to the British Embassy.⁶⁸ These notes contained the open threat to invoke the Rio Treaty. Similarly, Argentina considered an appeal to the OAS and shortly after the incident Jose Carlos Vittone, the Argentine representative to the Organization in Washington, was summoned to Buenos Aires to discuss making an appeal.⁶⁹

The Chilean and Argentine threats to invoke the Rio Treaty in defense of their rights in Antarctica gave much greater international importance to what was otherwise a relatively local dispute. United States officials reacted unfavorably to this suggestion, since it would put them in a very awkward position of publicly having to choose between their British allies or their hemispheric neighbors.⁷⁰ If the United States voted against OAS action this would offer excellent propaganda opportunities for Chilean Communists as well as giving right-wing factions in the Chilean Congress an excuse for demanding the withdrawal of Chile from the Pan-American organization. US officials also pointed out that raising the Deception Island incident at the OAS would likely stimulate existing “anti-colonial” attitudes

⁶⁷ *La Estrella*, 20 February 1953 “Cancilleres de Chile y la Argentina harán declaración conjunta sobre la Isla Decepción.”

⁶⁸ United States Embassy Santiago (Bowers) to Department of State, 20 February 1953. USNA, 702.022/2-2053.

⁶⁹ Department of State to US Embassies in Santiago and Buenos Aires, 12 March 1953. USNA, 702.022/3-1253.

⁷⁰ In contrast to the United States, several other Latin American countries, such as Guatemala, offered the Chileans and Argentines their full support. US Embassy Guatemala to Department of State, 28 February 1953. USNA, 702.022/2-2853. The United States lobbied other governments in the OAS in an attempt to dissuade them from supporting the Chileans and Argentines. See, for example, USNA 702.022/3-1553. United States Embassy Caracas to Secretary of State, 15 March 1953. USNA, 702.022/2-2853.

among the Latin Americans, at a time when both the United States and Britain were relying on their co-operation regarding broader issues in the United Nations and elsewhere.⁷¹

The Deception Island incident became a test case for Argentine-Chilean relations and the idea of a South American Antarctica. Despite the initial prospect of a coordinated response, the Argentines and Chileans could not decide upon a common path to follow. The Chilean government was divided between taking joint action with Argentina against the British or standing alone in protection of its rights.⁷² President Ibañez supported alliance with Argentina, and was also keen on maintaining good relations with the United States, while his Foreign Minister Olavarría preferred unilateral Chilean action backed up by an appeal to the OAS.⁷³ After two meetings of intense debate, the Chilean Antarctic Commission decided that no action should be taken conjointly with Argentina, since Argentina had no rights to sovereignty in Deception Island.⁷⁴ One week later Olivarria, the Chilean Foreign Minister, reported to Bowers, the United States' Ambassador, that Perón's emissary Vittone had gone as far as offering a "fifty-fifty division whole Antarctic region, Chile to remain with portion south this continent while Argentina would get

⁷¹ Department of State (Smith) to United States Embassy London. 10 April 1953. USNA, 702.022/4/753.

⁷² The question of raising the Deception Island incident at the OAS further complicated the Anglo-Chilean relationship. In discussion of the incident with the British, the Argentine government said that it did not want to take the case to the OAS. However, a minor Argentine Foreign Office official told the American Embassy that Argentina had agreed that Chile should take initiative, with Argentina seconding, because Chile had better claim and could rally broader support in OAS. See, United States Embassy Buenos Aires (Nufer) to Secretary of State, 2 April 1953. USNA, 702.022/4-253.

⁷³ United States Embassy Santiago to Secretary of State, 4 April 1953. USNA, 702.022/4-453.

⁷⁴ United States Embassy Santiago to Secretary of State, 23 March 1953. USNA, 702.022/3-2353. The Chilean position, dating back to the negotiations of the early twentieth century, was that Argentina had rights to the South Orkneys, while the Chilean claim encompassed the whole of the South Shetlands, of which Deception Island was a part.

remainder on other side of the globe.”⁷⁵ The Chileans, Olivarria added, had not taken this offer seriously, and had resisted Argentine insistence on joint action. Alluding to divisions within the Government, he continued:

...Chilean decision taken after full consultation (1) with Antarctic Commission most whose members are retired officers appointed thereto by previous administration and (2) with Foreign Affairs Committee of Congress majority of whose members not Ibañistas. On this question he said there is no opposition but complete agreement with government.⁷⁶

As the Chilean reaction to the Deception Island incident became caught up in broader domestic debates over the future course of Chilean foreign policy, British and North American officials noted with surprise that the Chilean response was “less reasonable” than that of Argentina.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, the Chilean Government continued its direct negotiations with Britain in an attempt to reach an arrangement that would satisfy both sides. On 31 March, the British Embassy made inquiries in Santiago about the Chilean mission to Queen Elizabeth’s coronation.⁷⁸ The Chilean Foreign Ministry replied that if favorable progress was made over the Deception Island incident then the Foreign Minister would attend the coronation, if not, the Chilean party would be headed by a lesser official. Such a threat represented the more pedantic side of a Chilean policy that was rapidly becoming more obdurate. On the same day, Olivarria met with

⁷⁵ United States Embassy Santiago to Secretary of State, 31 March 1953. USNA, 702.022/3-3153.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ United States Embassy London (Aldrich) to Secretary of State, 7 April 1953. USNA, 702.022/4-753.

⁷⁸ United States Embassy Santiago (Bowers) to Secretary of State, 31 March 1953. USNA, 702.022/3-3153.

Bowers in Santiago to warn him of the hard line that Chile was proposing to take.⁷⁹ Olivarría said that Chile “with its warlike traditions” could not take lying down destruction of its shelter on Deception Island and that it must be restored “even if it costs us our whole fleet.” The Chilean Foreign Minister reported that a “fully munitioned” Chilean fleet was heading to Punta Arenas from where it would proceed to Deception Island in order to restore the Chilean hut under armed protection. The Rio Treaty would be simultaneously invoked.⁸⁰

The following day, 1 April, Claude Bowers arranged to meet Olivarría at 11:00 in the morning.⁸¹ When the United States’ Ambassador arrived at the Foreign Ministry he was informed that the Chilean Foreign Minister had just resigned. Bowers noted to the State Department, “this probably had no connection with Deception incident.” However, that same morning the Chileans had received an “extremely stiff” letter from the British, refusing to concede to any of Chile’s demands, which they thought was simultaneously being read in the Commons by Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary.⁸² Olivarría told the United States Ambassador that this note ended any hope for amicable settlement, adding that he had no other recourse than to act at once and evoke the Rio Treaty, “to see what the Organization of American States is worth.” When he had been called to see the

⁷⁹ United States Embassy Santiago to Secretary of State, 31 March 1953. USNA 702.022/3-3153.

⁸⁰ Asesoría Jurídica, 1 April 1953. RR.EE., Departamento de Límites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958. However, the Chilean Judicial Assessor did not believe that an appeal to the OAS would be successful, citing, for example, the fact that the Chileans could not prove that the British action in Deception Island was not “police action” as the Falkland Islands authorities claimed.

⁸¹ United States Embassy Santiago (Bowers) to Secretary of State, 1 April 1953. USNA, 702.022/4-153.

⁸² It turned out that this letter was not read out in Parliament. Rather, Minister of State, Selwyn Lloyd in reply to Parliamentary question stated that the Chilean Government had been informed that its memorandum of 24 March “did not hold prospect of mutually satisfactory solution.” United States Embassy London (Aldrich) to Secretary of State. 7 April 1953. USNA 702.022/4-753.

President to receive news of his dismissal, he had been discussing plans for naval action in Deception Island with the Minister of Defense, who had also been asked to resign.⁸³ While this “cabinet crisis” was not wholly precipitated by discussion of Chile’s response to British aggression, it clearly reflected major differences of opinion that were brought to the surface by the Deception Island incident. President Ibañez – as his subsequent climb-down revealed – did not want to take military action in Deception Island, or take the matter to the Organization of American States.⁸⁴ Olivarría later sought to distance himself from the “cowardly” policy adopted by the Ibañez Government, and said the worst thing about losing his job was having to tell the brave soldiers and sailors.⁸⁵

In the weeks that followed, Bowers acted as an intermediary between the governments of Chile and Great Britain.⁸⁶ Although he was not able to broker any positive agreement between the disputing countries, the US Ambassador did help to diffuse the tensions, and, most importantly, prevent the question being raised at the OAS.⁸⁷ The threat that Chile might “declare war” on Great Britain lingered for a

⁸³ This information came out three years later in a letter by Olivarría to *El Mercurio* on 13 April 1956, containing a rigorous defense of his position during the Deception Island incident. Olivarría attributed his dismissal to a “cabinet crisis.”

⁸⁴ In the aftermath of Olivarría’s dismissal, the State Department wrote to Bowers asking whether efforts could be made to prevent Chile raising the incident at the OAS. Bowers wrote back saying that the President and his new Foreign Minister Fenner, “who was appointed because of Ibañez’s faith in his personal devotion,” would probably not take the question to the OAS, although he saw no harm in making clear the US position. Department of State to United States Embassy Santiago, 3 April 1953. USNA 702.022/4-153. See also, United States Embassy Santiago to Secretary of State. 4 April 1953. USNA, 702.022/4-453.

⁸⁵ *El Mercurio*, 13 April 1956.

⁸⁶ See, for example, Ministerio de RR.EE. a Embachile: Washington, Londres, Buenos Aires, 10 April 1953. RR.EE., Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.

⁸⁷ Countries such as Mexico were keen that if an American country wished to raise an issue at the OAS it should be debated. See United States Embassy Mexico D.F. to Department of State, 10 April 1953. USNA, 702.022/4-1053. For a detailed discussion of the reasons why the United States and Britain did not want the question raised at the OAS, which focused on not wanting to inflame anti-colonial sentiment, see, Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. PA Wilkinson, First Secretary, British Embassy, 10 April 1953. USNA, 702.022/4-1053.

couple of weeks after the dismissal of Olivarria, but the Chilean government was gradually able to let its public threat to raise the matter at the OAS drop quietly without losing face.⁸⁸ Throughout the rest of the year the Chileans continued making demands regarding Deception Island.⁸⁹ The US Embassy in London reported that the British were not too concerned:

... The British do not therefore see an early end to this incident but they are far less worried than previously; this series of disputes has been continuing for some time and, although everyone would like to see it solved, the situation is a long way from the boiling point. The FO has by no means given up in its search for a solution, however, for it would like to have this troublesome and potentially very serious question cleared up.⁹⁰

The threat persisted that the issue of “Colonies and Territories” might be discussed by the OAS at its tenth meeting in Caracas, and the OAS threat continued to be raised in diplomatic negotiations.⁹¹

Attempts to resolve the Deception Island dispute revived a certain interest in the Chilean plans for a *modus vivendi*, which had first been introduced in 1948, as a possible way out of the diplomatic impasse.⁹² In August 1953, for example, the

⁸⁸ The expression “Declare War” was used, somewhat sarcastically, by a State Department Official. Albert H. Gerberich (OSA) to Mr. Bernbaum (OSA) and Mr. Barall (OSA), 10 April 1953. USNA, 702.022/4-1053.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Embajador de Chile en Washington a Señor Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, 15 May 1953. RR.EE., Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.

⁹⁰ United States States Embassy London (Margaret Joy Tibbetts, 2nd Sec) to Department of State, 16 July 1953. USNA, 702.022/7-1653.

⁹¹ John C. Dreier (US Ambassador to OAS) to Mr. Jamison (AR), 5 June 1953. USNA, 702.022/6-553. See also, Ministerio de RR.EE. a Embachile Washington, 30 July 1953. RR.EE., “Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.”

⁹² See, for example, United States Embassy Santiago (Bowers) to Secretary of State, 24 February 1953. USNA, 702.022/2-2453. Immediately after the incident, the Chilean Ambassador in Buenos Aires had raised the possibility of opening negotiations about some sort of status quo agreement with the Argentine Foreign Ministry. Although later, Olivarría stated that the matter was not taken up

Chileans included the consideration of a status quo agreement for Antarctica in part of a three point plan that would also see the Chileans quietly rebuild their hut, probably in a different location, and the governments of Great Britain and Chile officially closing the incident.⁹³ However, by this stage the American Defense Department had raised serious objections to the idea of a *modus vivendi*. Eisenhower had won the 1952 Presidential election and the Korean War was coming to an end: the United States military was ambitiously looking to the South with plans that it did not want to see shackled by international agreements. As a consequence, although the State Department remained keen on the idea, they could only react lukewarmly to the Chilean suggestion.⁹⁴

Late in 1953, Argentina took up the idea of some kind of *modus vivendi* and suggested an extension of the annual tri-partite naval accords to include something more substantial.⁹⁵ Early in 1954, a report from the United States Embassy in London to the State Department had summed up the dilemma that the Argentine proposal posed for the British Government:

Basically, the British attitude appears to be heavily conditioned by the possibility of a public outcry in both the House of Commons and the Press against any seeming diplomatic concessions in the area. While there are apparently sincere misgivings that with a *modus vivendi* or some variation of

with the Argentines since it was not considered a practical time to do so. United States Embassy Santiago to Secretary of State, 31 March 1953. USNA 702.022/3-3153.

⁹³ Milton Barall (OSA) to Woodward (ARA). 19 August 1953. USNA, 702.022/8-1953.

⁹⁴ For example, State Department officials noted that with the upswing in US-Argentine relations the timing was now much more propitious for negotiating such an agreement than it had been in previous years. See, W. Tapley Bennett, Jr. (OSA) to Ronhovde (State Department) Office Memorandum, 31 August 1953. USNA 702.022/8-3153.

⁹⁵ Argentina's suggestions were not accepted by Britain or Chile and the three countries signed the traditional tripartite agreement on 26 November. Memorandum para la reunión de la Comisión Chilena Antártica, Santiago, 24 November 1953. RR.EE., "Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958."

the Argentine proposals would have a tendency to recognize squatter's rights on "British Territory" in the Antarctic, which once taken up would be most difficult to dislodge later, the underlying fear is public opinion and the difficulty of explaining why "Latinos" were permitted rights on "British soil." Admittedly, this super-sensitivity, as it might be described, to public opinion is a reflection of the considerable criticism to which the present Government has been subjected for allegedly "abandoning" its positions in the Sudan and the Suez Canal.⁹⁶

Although relatively distant from the central concerns of British foreign policy in the early 1950s, the problem of maintaining British rights in the Falkland Islands Dependencies continued to be caught up in wider currents of British imperial affairs and domestic politics.

Two years later, in the Antarctic season 1954-55, the Chileans reconstructed their hut in a less provocative location on Deception Island.⁹⁷ The British quietly ignored this action. Even if plans to negotiate an official *modus vivendi* had stalled, a de facto means of living together, both in Antarctica and in the wider diplomatic sphere, prevailed. Argentina, for its part, made no effort to restore the hut the British

⁹⁶ United States Embassy London (2nd Secretary, Zimmerman) to Department of State, 5 February 1954. USNA, 702.022/2-554.

⁹⁷ The meeting of the Chilean Antarctic Commission to discuss this action took place on 26 October 1953. Several members of the Commission remained keen on taking control of the runway, by force if necessary, and building an airbase next to it. Cordovez and others argued against such a move. The Commission decided to build a small hut on Deception Island, but in a different location. Acta de la Reunión sobre la Antártica con los Representantes del Estado Mayor de las Fuerzas Armadas, 26 October 1953. RR.EE., "Departamento de Límites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958."

had demolished, although there was a Naval standoff near Deception Island between Britain and Argentina early in 1954.⁹⁸ Perón and Pujato had much grander plans for Argentine Antarctica, which would see the opening up of a new front in the contest for polar sovereignty.

⁹⁸ United States Embassy London to Department of State, 18 March 1954. USNA, 702.022/3-1854.

Chapter 7: A New Polar Front, 1954-55

Between 1954 and 1955, Argentina continued to take the lead in pursuing claims to Antarctic sovereignty. The Hope Bay and Deception Island incidents had galvanized Argentine public opinion behind Perón's "Antarctic Dream" and anti-British propaganda became clamorous. Colonel Pujato remained dominant in Antarctic affairs and he won support from the government to open up a new front in the Antarctic sovereignty dispute in the Weddell Sea. This vast region to the east of the Antarctic Peninsula was claimed by Argentina and Britain, but not by Chile. The sea ice conditions, combined with the difficulty of landing on the Filchner Ice Shelf, made this region one of the most inaccessible parts of the disputed territory. With the purchase of an icebreaker in 1954, the Argentine government made possible the penetration of the region and, early in January 1955, Pujato oversaw the construction of Base Belgrano on the eastern side of the Weddell Sea. From this base, Pujato intended to demonstrate Argentina's environmental authority over a region that remained virtually unexplored. In the back of his mind, Pujato even harbored a plan of launching an expedition to the South Pole, which, if it had been successful, would have been only the third expedition ever to cross overland to the bottom of the world.

Without an icebreaker, this was a region that could not easily be reached by the British. Indeed, it was in the Weddell Sea that Shackleton's *Endurance* had sunk almost forty years earlier. Argentina's expansion into the Weddell Sea seemed to suggest that Perón's Antarctic Dream knew no limits, and that the sovereignty dispute would continue to grow. Anthony Eden's Conservative government responded pragmatically with an attempt to draw a legal line under the escalation of

the dispute. Rather than trying to match the Argentines by purchasing an ice-breaker of their own, the British Government instead submitted a unilateral application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in an effort to resolve the dispute with both Argentina and Chile through international arbitration. British officials believed that this would prevent any further Argentine advances in Antarctica being used against them in the future, as well as giving Britain the moral high ground. Claims to environmental authority featured prominently in Britain's submission to the ICJ, as British lawyers sought to demonstrate their legal rights over the whole of the Falkland Islands Dependencies. Argentina and Chile, however, refused to accept the jurisdiction of the ICJ in a case that they claimed to regard as "purely domestic." Since the ICJ could only function through the consent of the countries involved, the Antarctic Case was never heard.

The period of escalating Antarctic hostilities that began at the very start of the 1950s came to an end in September 1955, when a military coup in Argentina overthrew President Perón. Perón's Antarctic Dream was perhaps symptomatic of a Presidency that was increasingly losing touch with reality and losing its grip on power. Important sectors of Argentine society – most importantly the Catholic Church and the Armed Forces – turned against the President and forced him into exile. The so-called *Revolución Libertador* disrupted Argentina's scientific program at a vital moment, and allowed other countries to catch up and overtake. Hernán Pujato was left stranded at Base Belgrano as a curious vestige of Peronism. He retained token control of the base, but without the support of the new government his plans for an expedition to the South Pole were shattered.

BASE BELGRANO

The tremendous escalation of Argentine activities in Antarctica during the first half of the 1950s actually accompanied a gradual erosion of President Perón's grip on power. From around 1953, the Argentine economy went into a downward spiral and, despite strict censorship, opposition voices began to be heard above the clamorous propaganda.¹ Despite all his nationalist rhetoric, the economic crisis forced Perón to seek a closer relationship with the United States. A sense prevailed in many quarters that Perón was losing touch with reality. In these changing circumstances, Argentina's Antarctic policy merged ever more closely with Perón's erratic "Antarctic Dream."² Following his return from leading "the First Argentine Scientific Expedition to Antarctica," Hernán Pujato pushed ahead with his plans for an Argentine expedition to the Weddell Sea, on the southeastern side of the Antarctic Peninsula. From the most southerly base on the continent, the Director of the Argentine Antarctic Institute (which bore his name) then hoped to launch an expedition to the South Pole. The two Generals, Pujato and Perón, fed off each other's ambitions and perpetuated their own delusions. The plan to plant the Argentine flag at the bottom of the world encapsulated the spirit of Peronist Argentina towards the middle of the 1950s.

Pujato's plans required the acquisition of an icebreaker that could operate in the frozen seas around Antarctica. Such a ship would significantly enhance the geographic range of activities and the temporal season in which they would be possible. Initially, Perón was not keen on the purchase of an icebreaker, noting that

¹ For details of Argentina's economic decline over this period, see Lewis, *The crisis of Argentine capitalism*.

² Martínez, *The Perón novel*.

it would cost between 8 and 14 million pesos to buy and take two to four years to construct.³ Pujato, however, was undeterred. He went ahead and negotiated the construction of an icebreaker with a German company for a cost of three million dollars, to be built within nine months. The Argentine Government approved this plan and the order was placed with G.Weser, Seebeck Werke, in Bremerhaven, Germany. The ship was equipped with an oceanographical laboratory, a meteorological center, and the capacity to launch radiosonde weather balloons. The ship was named *General San Martín* and it arrived in Argentina in November 1954 in time for the 1954-55 Antarctic Summer season.

While Pujato was planning his expedition to the far south, the Argentine Antarctic Commission continued to meet sporadically. However, the Commission became increasingly estranged from the real decision making over Argentine Antarctic policy, especially that concerning Argentine activity within Antarctica, which now took place entirely within the Argentine Antarctic Institute “Hernán Pujato.”⁴ The work of the Commission was limited to the propaganda and foreign relations aspects of Argentina’s territorial claims, as demonstrated by their extensive discussion of a “Plan Malvinas” throughout 1953 and beyond.⁵ The plan went to

³ Eugenio A. Genest, *Pujato y la Antártida Argentina en la década del cincuenta* ([Buenos Aires, Argentina], 1998). 47.

⁴ For example, at a meeting of the Argentine Antarctic Commission held on 10 June 1955, Brigadier Bernard attacked the autonomy with which the Instituto Argentino Antártico functioned and requested that the Antarctic Commission should be informed of activity in Antarctica, rather than having to read about it in the newspapers. Comisión Nacional del Antártico, Acta de la Reunión, 10 June 1955. MREYC, Organismos Internacionales Paquete 20.

⁵ Discussion of the “Plan Malvinas” by the Argentine Antarctic Commission at their meetings of 27 May 1953 and 12 June 1953. MREYC, Organismos Internacionales Paquete 20. In 1955, the US Embassy in Buenos Aires reported a typical editorial concerning the *Islas Malvinas* which appeared in *Democracia* newspaper: “The years of imperialism which did not need further justification than its own interest and its power has already passed or at least is near its end... and sooner or later the Malvinas will return to the fold of the ‘patria.’” American Embassy Buenos Aires to Department of State, 21 April, 1955. USNA, 702.022/4-2155.

great lengths to foster a sense of national grievance at the illegal occupation of the Islas Malvinas, but it suggested little that could be done constructively to reclaim the islands.⁶ In January 1955, the US Embassy in Buenos Aires reported to the State Department that the Argentine Antarctic Commission had voted to distribute 200,000 copies of a booklet presenting the Government's claims to sovereignty over Antarctica. A different US Embassy report noted the success of these various propaganda campaigns:

The idea of Argentine sovereignty in the special piece of pie Argentines have claimed for themselves in the Antarctic is upheld by all political parties. Moreover, the people have been so indoctrinated with the idea that they believe it as a matter of natural right; and they are aware of the fairly extensive operations carried out by Argentines there, the string of manned bases, the heavy expense incurred, etc. Accordingly, any Argentine administration of any political party will be faced with serious problems when the time comes to face up to the rights of others in the Antarctic.⁷

In Argentine Antarctic policy, as in so many other areas of public life, the Peronist administration had successfully created expectations among the Argentine people without fulfilling them.

Despite their propaganda successes, the members of the Argentine Antarctic Commission felt an increasingly palpable sense of frustration with their limited role. At a meeting held on 18 June 1954, the Commission actually became quite critical of

⁶ The propaganda work of the Commission had already reached comic levels at a meeting in November 1951, when Doctor Mendez Puig, a distinguished international lawyer, proposed the creation of two cartoon characters – named “*Pinguacho*” and “*Malvina*” – who would help to generate anti-English sentiment among Argentine youth. Reunión celebrada por la Comisión Nacional del Antártico, 27 November 1951. MREYC, Organismos Internacionales Paquete 15. Comisión Nacional del Antártico. Expediente 37. Año 1951.

⁷ American Embassy Buenos Aires to Department of State, 16 April 1955. USNA, 702.022/4-655.

the Government's policy statement towards Antarctica proposed by General Molina on behalf of President Perón. This policy centered on General Pujato's plans for a base on the Weddell Sea, which several members of the commission thought was expensive and unworkable.⁸ Tellingly, this meeting was attended by several high ranking naval officers, but none from the Army. The inter-service rivalry between the Army and the Navy, exacerbated by differences of opinion regarding President Perón, was not dissipating. This would become a dangerous tendency in the months to follow.

The objections raised by the Argentine Antarctic Commission towards the plans for a base on the Weddell Sea were ignored. One week after the arrival of the *General San Martín*, the Argentine Government passed a decree, which authorized the establishment of a new base – to be called Base Belgrano – in the Weddell Sea.⁹ With echoes of the famous resolution of the 1896 International Geographical Conference that started the heroic era of Antarctic Exploration, the decree noted “there remains an extensive zone of our sector neither explored nor occupied.” General Pujato entertained the ambition of leading what would be only the third expedition to set foot on the South Pole, after the expeditions of Amundsen and Scott in the season 1911-1912. The publicity and propaganda surrounding the Weddell Sea expedition did not highlight this idea of planting an Argentine flag at the South Pole, but it clearly emphasized the idea of man against nature. In the mid 1950s the Argentines were re-living the excitement of an earlier era of polar exploration.

⁸ Comisión Nacional del Antártico, 18 June 1954. MREYC, Organismos Internacionales Paquete 15

⁹ Genest, *Pujato y la Antártida Argentina en la década del cincuenta*. 49.

The *General San Martín* arrived at the shore of the Weddell Sea on 1 January 1955.¹⁰ The members of the expedition constructed Base Belgrano within two weeks, and it was inaugurated on 18 January. At a latitude of 78°03', this new base was the most southerly on the Antarctic Continent, only 1300km from the South Pole. General Pujato and 14 men, including pilots, settled in for a long polar winter. The expedition took two planes with it, which were used to explore a large area surrounding the base which had previously been unseen by human eyes.

The news of the establishment of Base Belgrano caught the United States and others by surprise, despite vague suggestions by Defense Minister Sosa Molina that the United States should be invited to send an observer on the expedition.¹¹ In December 1954, a US Embassy official had discussed Antarctic plans with the Argentine Foreign Ministry, and had not been informed of Pujato's plans to build a base on the Weddell Sea Coast¹². The United States Embassy reported that the Argentine Foreign Minister apologized for the miscommunication, claiming that on December 21, 1951, the Foreign Ministry itself had not known the details of the expedition: "he said the Ministry of the Navy had apparently not fully informed the Foreign Office and he said he would take the matter up with the Minister and the President." The US Embassy official commented:

¹⁰ Ibid. 51.

¹¹ American Embassy Buenos Aires to Department of State, 16 April 1955. USNA, 702.022/4-655. In September 1954, in a conversation with Assistant Secretary Holland, Perón had suggested "the United States and Argentina should try to work out their mutual problems in the area in a frank and friendly manner in order to avoid unrestrained competition over Antarctic rights."

¹² The construction of Base Belgrano particularly annoyed to the United States, since, in October 1954, Embassy Officials had informed the Argentine Foreign Ministry of North American plans to build a base at a nearby location.

Although it is possible that the [Argentine] Foreign Office was not aware of the plan to establish the new base, since other evidence indicates a lack of coordination and inter-service rivalry in regard to Argentine Antarctic operations, it is to be noted that he has not subsequently offered any explanation. Furthermore, sometime later a minor official of the Foreign Office let slip the fact that the plan to establish a new, far southerly Antarctic Base was known to him and others in the FO. He said that they had in jest asked General Pujato (commander of the new base) to pose with them for pictures before his departure. They wanted, they said, to have a personal memento of the “soon to be dead hero.”¹³

The fact that Argentine Antarctic policy was characterized by a mixture of half-truths and bitter rivalries did nothing to alleviate the provocative nature of the construction of Base Belgrano.

The US Embassy report continued: “The Argentine announcement of a base was probably a particularly bitter pill for the British since, only the week before, wire service dispatches had announced British and Commonwealth plans for a joint expedition to the pole, to be launched from a base to be established more or less where the Argentines located.” As part of their plans for the up-coming International Geophysical Year (IGY), the British Commonwealth was planning an expedition that would attempt to fulfill Ernest Shackleton’s failed ambition of crossing the entire Antarctic continent over land.¹⁴ The expedition would be led by Vivian Fuchs and would include Sir Edmund Hillary, the recent conqueror of Mount Everest. Just as the Argentines were attempting to revive the *zeitgeist* of the heroic era of Antarctic exploration, the British were doing exactly the same. However, there was practically

¹³ American Embassy Buenos Aires to Department of State, 16 April 1955. USNA, 702.022/4-655.

¹⁴ There is a tremendous literature on Ernest Shackleton’s *Endurance* expedition of 1914-1916, which became stuck in the pack ice of the Weddell Sea. The ship had to be abandoned and Shackleton made a heroic voyage across the Scotia Sea to get help for his stranded men. The entire party survived, but the plan for crossing the continent barely got started. See, for example, Lansing, *Endurance; Shackleton's incredible voyage*.

no publicity surrounding the competition between Pujato and Fuchs to get to the South Pole. The geopolitical stakes were by now too high to risk everything on a race across the ice. Nevertheless, the location of Base Belgrano on the Weddell Sea coast, far to the southeast of the Antarctic Peninsula, opened up a second front in the struggle for polar sovereignty, which would be bitterly contested during the IGY and the years leading up to it.

THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

In January 1955, the British Government wrote to the Governments of both Argentina and Chile suggesting in the strongest possible diplomatic language that the three countries should take their sovereignty dispute in the Antarctic Peninsula to the International Court of Justice in The Hague.¹⁵ The British stated that they were sure that the two South American countries would want to resolve the dispute definitively, but added that if this invitation were rejected, Great Britain reserved the right to take whatever action it deemed appropriate in defending its sovereignty rights to the Falkland Islands Dependencies. These threats included the unilateral submission of the case to the International Court and an appeal to the United Nations Security Council. This was not the first time that Britain had suggested that the three countries submit their dispute to legal arbitration, but it was the first time that the British suggestion carried with it such a threat of serious consequences if the offer were rejected. Taking the case to the International Court of Justice offered the Conservative Government several advantages, as an official at the United States Embassy in London noted:

¹⁵ See, for example, Reunión de la Comisión Nacional del Antártico, 27 January 1955. MREYC, Organismos Internacionales Paquete 20, Expediente 47, Comisión Nacional del Antártico.

A decision by the International Court... would be saleable to Commons and the press. The Foreign Office believe this would be true regardless of whether a defeat might be suffered at the hands of the Court on a number of the British claims, and the Foreign Office in fact recognizes the possibility of adverse decisions on some points.¹⁶

In the twilight of Churchill's premiership, at a time when the Conservative Government was coming under ever increasing pressure throughout the Colonial Empire, a ruling by the International Court of Justice seemed to offer a way to end, one way or the other, the unwanted dispute in the Falklands Islands Dependencies.¹⁷ An unfavorable decision could not be portrayed as an imperial "cave in," but rather a demonstration that Great Britain upheld the principles of international law, while a favorable decision would settle the question of sovereignty once and for all in the eyes of the international community.¹⁸

The prospect of taking the Antarctic sovereignty dispute to the International Court of Justice in The Hague appealed much less to the two South American countries than it did to Great Britain. Well aware of this, British officials hoped to imply that any refusal by Argentina and Chile to submit the case to legal arbitration simply reflected the South Americans' fears that they would lose the case. The British saw a certain irony in the fact that although the Argentines and Chileans pedantically made formal protests and statements at every conceivable opportunity in preparation for an international ruling, they were not actually willing to put their case

¹⁶ United States Embassy London (2nd Secretary, Zimmerman) to Department of State, 5 February 1954. USNA, 702.022/2-554.

¹⁷ Churchill retired in April 1955 to be replaced by Anthony Eden.

¹⁸ Indeed, the United States Government was worried that any ruling by the international court would give the winner a very strong legal foundation for their claim, thereby undermining the US position of "reserving" its rights.

to the test. However, beneath the British bravado there was also fear. Argentina had recently purchased an icebreaker, and at the very same time as the British lawyers were suggesting arbitration, General Pujato was establishing the most southerly base in the disputed region on the shores of the Weddell Sea. Many British officials realized that they were being “outclassed” by Argentina in Antarctica.¹⁹ They confided to the North Americans that they saw an appeal to the International Court as a way of applying a “cut off date” to the Argentine advances in Antarctica, preventing any future activities in Antarctica from having any legal implication.²⁰

The South American reasons for not wanting to take the dispute to the International Court were as much political as legal. Antarctica had a very different meaning to the people of Argentina and Chile than it did to the British, especially after several years of intense government propaganda campaigns. South Americans on both sides of the Andes had come to see Antarctica as a fundamental part of their national territory. However, the political circumstances were quite different in the two countries, and, although British officials tended not to realize the fact, Argentina and Chile did not share the same reasons for rejecting the decision.

In Argentina, the southern continent mattered more to President Perón as an anti-imperialist “*irrendenta*” than as an undisputed part of the national territory.²¹ Perón believed that Argentina was winning the contest for Antarctic sovereignty, and saw no reason why the glory should be taken away at the stroke of a judge’s pen. A

¹⁹ Dodds, *Pink ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire*. 26.

²⁰ United States Embassy London (Aldrich) to State Department, 21 January 1955. USNA, 702.022/1-2155.

²¹ The lack of archival resources, especially personal papers, makes it very difficult to know what Perón was thinking about Antarctica. Nevertheless, in his speeches and writings on Antarctica, the Argentine president almost always put as much emphasis on the struggle itself, as on the eventual outcome. The only way that Perón wanted to “win” the contest was by a straight defeat of Great Britain.

sense prevailed that any ruling by the International Court of Justice would probably involve some form of compromise and division of territory. There would be winners and losers, but probably not total winners and losers. Given the success of Argentine propaganda in making the people believe that the whole of “Argentine Antarctica” belonged to Argentina, anything short of total victory could be presented as a defeat: the further dismemberment of Argentine territory.²² The only way Perón could really “win” the dispute would be through a triumphant Argentine victory and a humiliating British surrender. A meeting of the Argentine Antarctic Commission in January 1955 discussed Argentina’s response to the British note in a slightly more somber fashion.²³ Some of the members of the Commission noted a distinct change in the tone of Britain’s letter, and they worried that in any Antarctic showdown the United States would almost certainly back Great Britain. However, other members of the Commission, with closer connections to President Perón and the Argentine Antarctic Institute “General Hernán Pujato” argued that Argentina should not be pushed into defensive action, but rather should go on the legal counter-attack.

In Chile there was a genuine fear that their country would lose a case at the International Court of Justice. While most officials believed that Chile had excellent historical and geographical claims to the Antarctic Peninsula region, they realized that their efforts to “effectively occupy” the region had been less successful than those of Great Britain and Argentina. Julio Escudero, the country’s legal specialist on Antarctic affairs, had repeatedly counseled against getting involved in a “race for

²² Escudé, *La patología del nacionalismo argentino*.

²³ Reunión de la Comisión Nacional del Antártico, 27 January 1955. MREYC, Organismos Internacionales, Paquete 20, Expediente 47, Comisión Nacional del Antártico.

bases,” which he felt Chile had no chance of winning.²⁴ Chilean officials generally clung on to the idea of a *modus vivendi* agreement followed by an international conference that would negotiate rather than adjudicate territorial questions in Antarctica. In such a conference Chile believed that it would have the backing of much of the international community, including the United States. In the strictly legalistic atmosphere of the International Court, there would be little room for sentimental appeals to Chilean rights to the Peninsula.

Later in January 1955, both Argentina and Chile replied that they would not accept the British suggestion that the three countries should jointly take the case to the International Court of Justice. The British therefore decided that they would unilaterally appeal to the Court.²⁵ Professor Waldock, an eminent international lawyer, prepared the case.²⁶ Without the consent of the two South American countries, the US State Department was skeptical of Britain’s ability to achieve any kind of determination of its Antarctic rights, since the International Court had no real authority beyond the consent of the plaintiffs.²⁷ No decision of the International Court could be imposed upon an unwilling party, unless there was some form of yet untried United Nations action behind it. The British also realized that their actions had very little chance of definitively resolving the dispute. But they saw an excellent

²⁴ Acta de la Reunion de la Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1 December 1953. RR.EE., “Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.”

²⁵ United States Embassy London (Aldrich) to State Department, 21 January 1955. USNA 702.022/1-2155.

²⁶ Waldock had recently accompanied Dag Hammarskjold, the United Nations Secretary General, to Beijing.

²⁷ The State Department feared the legal implications for its own claims to Antarctica if the case should ever go to the International Court, and there was certainly no encouragement from the United States for this course of action. Department of State (Dulles) to American Embassies in London, Buenos Aires and Santiago, 28 January 1955. USNA, 702.022/1-2855.

opportunity to take the legal and moral high ground, and also the chance to make their case in the strongest possible terms to the international community.

In May 1955, the British Government submitted an eighty-page document to the International Court of Justice outlining the case for British sovereignty in the Falkland Islands Dependencies.²⁸ The first half of the application dealt with the British case against Argentina, and the second half against Chile. In making Britain's case, Government lawyers used the precedents established by the final act of the Berlin Congress of 1885, which had carved up the continent of Africa between the European imperial powers.²⁹ This act codified the nineteenth century state practice regarding the acquisition of overseas territories, and put the emphasis on acts of discovery, formal claims, and administrative activity, rather than on any "natural rights" to the territory in question. By appealing to the imperialistic precedent established by the Berlin Congress, British lawyers hoped to put their claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies on firm legal foundations.³⁰

Britain's submission opened with a list of the numerous geographical discoveries made by British nationals in the region.³¹ South Georgia, the summary began, "may well" have been discovered by the English merchant Anthony de la Roche as early as 1675. Captain Cook conclusively rediscovered the island one hundred years later, formally taking possession of it and naming it in honor of King George III. In the same year the British navigator discovered the South Sandwich

²⁸ International Court of Justice, *Antarctica cases (United Kingdom v. Argentina; United Kingdom v. Chile): orders of March 16th, 1956: removal from the list.*

²⁹ See Jorge Berguño, "Intellectual Origins of the Antarctic Treaty." Paper presented to second SCAR workshop on history of Antarctic Science, Santiago, September 2006.

³⁰ Berguño, "Intellectual Origins."

³¹ International Court of Justice, *Antarctica cases (United Kingdom v. Argentina; United Kingdom v. Chile): orders of March 16th, 1956: removal from the list.* Argentine and Chilean authors have contested almost all of these claims.

archipelago, which he named after the First Lord of the Admiralty. In 1819, English sea captain William Smith discovered the South Shetland Islands, and in 1821 the British sealing captain George Powell became the first to sight the South Orkney Islands. Both island groups were named after Scottish islands. Perhaps most contentiously, the British submission claimed that it had been the British Naval Officer Edward Bransfield who had been the first person to see a part of the Antarctic Peninsula, thereby becoming the “discoverer” of the Antarctic continent. This assertion contradicted strong claims by both the United States and Russia that one of their nationals had been the first to discover Antarctica.³² According to the British lawyers, Bransfield made his sighting of the Trinity Peninsula at the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula on 30 January 1820, although they conceded that the weather had been hazy. Bransfield had named what he saw Trinity Land, in a compliment to the board of Trinity House, the British institution responsible for pilotage. In summarizing the British case for geographical discovery, the submission to the International Court of Justice stressed the political importance of place names:

The first discoveries of South Georgia, the South Sandwich Islands, the South Orkneys, the South Shetlands, and Graham Land were thus all made by British nationals – a fact reflected in the names given to these territories by which they have been known, and have figured in maps and charts, ever since.... Some discoveries of particular parts of these principal groups of territory were made by explorers or seamen of other nationalities; but the initial discoveries of all five principal groups were British. There were no Spanish or Argentine discoveries.³³

³² See Introduction.

³³ International Court of Justice, *Antarctica cases (United Kingdom v. Argentina; United Kingdom v. Chile): orders of March 16th, 1956: removal from the list*. 12.

In the hands of international lawyers, the romantic history of Antarctic exploration and discovery became highly politicized since it laid the basis of legal rights to the region.

Following its summary of British discoveries, the British submission to the International Court of Justice went on to outline the administrative acts through which Great Britain had demonstrated its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands Dependencies. In 1908, the British Government issued a Letters Patent, which provided for the government and administration of this most southerly part of the British Empire.³⁴ According to the submission, the Letters Patent merely confirmed and defined a legal title that had already been in existence for many years. As early as 1843, when the British Government were making administrative provisions for their newly acquired territory in the South Atlantic, the language spoke of “Settlements in the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies.” Since 1887, the Colonial Office Year Book had been referring to South Georgia as part of the Dependencies. It was South Georgia that was at the center of the “Whaling Ordinances” of 1906 by which the Falkland Islands Government sought to tax and regulate the nascent industry. These ordinances made taking whales without a permit unlawful. After the Letters Patent of 1907, the ordinances were revised, but the principle remained the same: companies interested in whaling in the oceans around Antarctica had to apply to the Falkland Islands Government for permission. Most importantly, according to the British submission to the International Court,

³⁴ The Letters Patent of 1908 included a large part of southern Patagonia in the territory that it claimed for the British Empire. This “oversight” was corrected in 1917 by a second letters patent defining the limits of the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

Norwegian, Argentine, and Chilean companies did actually apply for licenses, thereby confirming Britain's territorial rights.

In a reflection of the growing importance of science and the environment within the sovereignty dispute during the 1950s, the British legal submission incorporated the idea of conservation into its case for sovereignty over the Falkland Islands Dependencies. The British lawyers claimed "one of the chief objects of the legislation was the conservation of stocks by regulating the number and tonnage of whaling vessels, the number of whaling licenses, [and] the number of whales to be taken by each license holder." Although the effectiveness of these regulations was reduced from the mid-1920s, following the advent of pelagic whaling from large, self-sustained, factory ships, the British continued their efforts to preserve whale stocks. Most importantly, in 1925, the Colonial Office began an annual expedition of oceanographic research known as the Discovery Investigations in an attempt to put whale conservation policies on a firm scientific foundation:

...the Dependencies during this period were covered literally by a network of patrols undertaken by the Discovery Committee. The main focus of the Committee's research was on the natural history of whales, the most important economic resource of the Dependencies, and especially intensive observations were made on the whaling grounds of South Georgia, the South Shetlands and Graham Land. But the Committee also collected very extensive information on the hydrography and biology of the Dependencies, on the navigation and charting of their waters, and on Antarctic ice and ice-navigation. A large and important body of scientific material has been published by the Committee in the 27 volumes of "*Discovery Reports*," and its research on the natural history of whales is admitted by expert opinion to have made a vital contribution towards the effective solving of the international problem of the conservation of whale fisheries.³⁵

³⁵ International Court of Justice, *Antarctica cases (United Kingdom v. Argentina; United Kingdom v. Chile): orders of March 16th, 1956: removal from the list*.

In contrast to the British preoccupation with conservation – albeit from the perspective of maximizing economic resources – neither the Argentine nor the Chilean governments had shown any inclination towards the protection or scientific study of Antarctic whales. British lawyers noted: “in the first quarter of the present century, when the territorial waters of the Dependencies were the base of operations of several whaling companies of different nationalities, Argentina took no measures (as a prudent sovereign would have done, or sought to do) to regulate these activities, or to conserve the stocks of the principal economic resource of the territories concerned.”³⁶ Argentina had not participated in the 1927 League of Nations conference on whaling held in Geneva. According to the British submission, the message was clear: Great Britain had demonstrated its moral rights to possession of the Antarctic Peninsula region while Argentina and Chile had not.

The British submission concluded by detailing the ways in which Argentina and Chile had “embarked on a definite policy of encroachment” in the Antarctic Peninsula region. The lawyers hinted at the cowardly nature of the South American claims, made while “the United Kingdom Government was occupied in the North and South Atlantic in dealing with attacks by Axis naval forces on Allied and Neutral sea-borne trade.”³⁷ Despite its preoccupation with fighting Nazism in Europe and around the world, Great Britain had found the resources to respond to the Argentine and Chilean challenges in Antarctica. Through the wartime Operation Tabarin, it was the British who had become the first country permanently to occupy the Antarctic Peninsula, thereby fulfilling the legal requirement of “effective

³⁶ Ibid. 27.

³⁷ Ibid.

occupation.” And the post-war Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey had continued and expanded the permanent British presence in Antarctica, while protests had been made at every opportunity against the South American pretensions. The British Government’s submission to the International Court of Justice argued not only that the Falkland Islands Dependencies belonged to Great Britain from every legal perspective, but also implied that the South Americans were morally inferior and had no rights to the territories in question.

Officials in Argentina and Chile agreed with very little of the British case, but they were not prepared to submit to the arbitration of the court. Both South American countries went to great lengths to explain to the world why they could not accept arbitration of the Antarctic Sovereignty Dispute by the International Court of Justice.³⁸ Central to the cases of both Argentina and Chile was the claim that the Antarctic Peninsula formed an “integral part” of their national territories, and was therefore exempt from an international ruling. In an appeal to Pan-American sentiment, both countries also argued that they couldn’t accept arbitration since it would violate their obligations to the Rio Treaty of Reciprocal Defense.³⁹ The Argentine and Chilean press stood firmly behind their governments and developed the legal and moral case against submission. In Santiago, *El Mercurio*, the leading establishment newspaper, argued that the unilateral procedure followed by Great Britain represented an “innovation in international life,” which disregarded the principle of self-determination as an essential attribute of sovereignty.⁴⁰ Reverting once again to the rhetoric of anti-colonialism, the establishment newspaper

³⁸ For example, American Embassy Buenos Aires to Department of State, 17 May 1955. USNA 702.022/5-1755.

³⁹ See, American Embassy Santiago to Department of State, 16 May 1955. USNA 702.022/5-1655.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

concluded that no government “may be compelled to do something against its will, without annulling its independence and converting the state into a protectorate or reducing it to the status of a colony.”⁴¹

The refusal of Argentina and Chile to accept the authority of the International Court of Justice meant that the Antarctic case was never heard. There was nothing the British or the international community could do to force the Court to hear the case, and in March 1956, the case was quietly removed from the Court’s list. Britain’s inability to get the case heard represented both a success and a failure for British diplomacy. On the one hand, by showing a willingness to accept international legal arbitration, the British were able to take the moral high ground in the dispute. From now on they could defend their actions by referring back to their willingness to comply with international legal norms. On the other hand, this moral high ground counted for little if there was no chance of arbitration or negotiation, and, in the virulently anti-colonialist atmosphere of the mid-1950s, the moral authority was successfully countered in much of the world by the South American accusation that British claims were fundamentally imperialist in their nature. The episode meant that there would be no conventional resolution of the sovereignty dispute in the way that, for example, the 1933 East Greenland Case had been decided in Denmark’s favor. With hindsight, the failure to hear the case at the International Court of Justice can be seen as laying an important foundation for the Antarctic

⁴¹ The Argentine Government used similar language in a note explaining why it was rejecting international arbitration: “The acceptance of the course proposed by the British ‘would be incompatible with the aspirations of the peoples and governments of this Continent who have confirmed in the 10th Inter-American Conference at Caracas their desire finally to eliminate colonialism.’” American Embassy Buenos Aires to Department of State, 17 May 1955. USNA 702.022/5-1755.

Treaty of 1959. But at the time the South American refusal to go to the Hague looked like it would indefinitely prolong the dispute.

OVERTHROW OF PERÓN

Throughout the first half of the 1950s, officials on all sides of the sovereignty dispute had noted that the Argentine President was a major obstacle in the way of any compromise being reached. Perón had become obsessed by his “Antarctic Dream,” and, in many ways, he had more to gain by keeping the dispute alive than by winning any partial victory. During the early 1950s, the Argentine population was becoming increasingly polarized by Perón’s government. On one side, Perón maintained a firm base of support from his traditional constituency among the working classes. Whipped up by government propaganda, this support became almost religious in its fervor. On the other side, a growing number of people – led by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and many among the military – were becoming exasperated by Perón’s policies. The traditional middle and upper classes believed that Perón was wasting the riches of Argentina and destroying their country. Nevertheless, the vast majority of Perón’s opponents shared the belief that the *Malvinas* and the Antarctic Peninsula belonged to Argentina. The promotion of Argentine sovereignty in Antarctica therefore offered the embattled President a chance to flex his nationalist muscles and a hope of bringing together a divided country.

Unfortunately for Perón, his hard line policy in Antarctica was not enough to quell the rising tide of opposition. In particular, the economy was in rapid decline.⁴²

⁴² For a detailed description of the economic problems of Argentina, see Lewis, *The crisis of Argentine capitalism*.

The policies which Perón had used to challenge the alliance between the Argentine oligarchy and foreign business – his nationalist crusade against economic imperialism – led to major structural adjustments in the Argentine economy. The boom years immediately after the Second World War had allowed Perón to make economic promises that soon proved difficult to fulfill in areas such as welfare, pensions, health, and education. The establishment of IAPI, the government monopoly on export agriculture, proved to be a major disincentive to private investment in agriculture. As a consequence, Argentina did not share equally in the surge in agricultural productivity that accompanied the end of the Second World War in much of the rest of the world. The nationalization of the railroads and other privately held businesses did not end industrial unrest, and in many industries days lost to strikes actually increased. More often than not, Perón responded to worker's demands by making concessions and raising pay. This led to inflation and began the classic downward spiral that has come to be associated with populist economics.⁴³

Opposition to Perón was led by the Catholic Church, but also contained significant elements from the military, especially in the Navy. On 15 June 1955, Naval aircraft flew over the center of Buenos Aires dropping bombs on the presidential palace, the Casa Rosada, killing hundreds of people. Perón himself survived unhurt, and he emerged defiantly to order the destruction of the forces of oligarchy. Nevertheless, the attack marked the beginning of the end of Perón's presidency. Three months later a military uprising took control of the city of Cordoba, the largest city in the Argentine interior. In response to this event, the armed forces split in two, but it quickly became apparent that the anti-Perón forces

⁴³ Ibid.

were much stronger than those of Perón's supporters. After minor skirmishes across Argentina, the President fled the country, first to Paraguay and then to Spain. To the delight of many among the Argentine elite, the *Revolución Libertador*, as the uprising became known, had successfully toppled Perón's democratically elected government and replaced it with a military dictatorship headed by General Aramburu.

The *Revolución Libertador* marked not only a new phase in the national life of Argentina, but also a new phase in the Antarctic sovereignty dispute. Although the military officers who took over the Argentine Government were no less nationalistic than Perón, they were slightly less obstinate and more willing to negotiate.⁴⁴ Several of the officers involved in the coup had direct experience in Antarctica, and the administrative transition in Antarctic affairs was a smooth one. Soon after taking power, the military government stripped General Pujato of his position as head of the Argentine Antarctic Institute and removed his name from the title of that institution. Admiral Panzarini, a naval officer who had served on the Antarctic Commission, became the new head of the Institute. The military government continued its de-Peronization of Antarctica by removing all the Antarctic names with associations with the overthrown regime: "Bahía Eva Perón," for example, was simply crossed out of school textbooks. Pujato himself remained at Base Belgrano in the Weddell Sea, a curious vestige of the Perón Government.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ One of the complaints against Perón was that he had isolated Argentina from the world community to the detriment of Argentina's diplomatic and defense position. One of the major foreign policy goals of the new government was to maneuver the country into a closer relationship with the Western anti-communist alliance. This meant that they at least had to appear more cooperative on such issues as Antarctica. Juan Archibaldo Lanús, *De Chapultepec al Beagle: política exterior argentina, 1945-1980* (Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1984).

⁴⁵ This untouchable Peronist outpost deep in the frozen south must have been one of the most curious anomalies of the new political situation in Argentina. Susana Rigoz, *Hernán Pujato: el conquistador del desierto blanco* (Buenos Aires, 2002).

When he finally returned to Buenos Aires eighteen months later, he was informed of his removal and he left the country in self-imposed exile. Perón's Antarctic dream was shattered, but Argentine interest in Antarctica would continue.

The removal of Perón from power delighted the other two powers with direct political interests in Antarctica. In Great Britain, the recently retired Winston Churchill apocryphally declared "the overthrow of Perón is the best thing that has happened to the British Empire since the end of the Second World War."⁴⁶ For Chile, the overthrow of Perón removed some of the ambiguity of its Antarctic policy. Perón's pan-Americanism and the idea of a South American Antarctica had created an awkward situation for Chilean politicians. On the one hand, alliance with Argentina offered a way of promoting Chilean Antarctic interests without having to pander to US or British interests; on the other hand, it was always clear that Perón saw himself as the dominant partner in this relationship. With Perón gone and a military government now in power, Chilean Antarctic policy could simply define itself against Argentina's overlapping claims. Perhaps most importantly for all countries involved in Antarctica, the overthrow of Perón brought back an element of trust and predictability to Argentine Antarctic policy, both of which would be necessary for any international agreement.

⁴⁶ Perón responded with a vituperative pamphlet written immediately after the coup that even went as far as claiming, almost certainly incorrectly, that Great Britain had co-operated with the oligarchic forces that had overthrown him.

Chapter 8: Internationalization and its Enemies, 1955-57

The period from 1955 to 1957 marked a decisive shift in the politics of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute. Growing international scientific and political interest in Antarctica meant that the conflict between Britain, Argentina, and Chile ceased to be a purely regional matter. Plans for an International Geophysical Year (IGY) – a massive, coordinated scientific study of the world, to be held in 1957-58 – brought Antarctica into the focus of the global scientific community. The relative lack of scientific understanding of the continent combined with its unique geographical position made it one of the central subjects of IGY research. Out of the twelve nations with plans for IGY work in Antarctica, the prospective programs of the United States and the Soviet Union were by far the largest. With the age of “Big Science” about to come to Antarctica, many feared that super-power rivalries would bring the Cold War to the bottom of the world. Amidst this contradictory climate of co-operation and suspicion, India made a proposal that the Antarctic question should be discussed at the United Nations. From being on the very edge of international affairs, Antarctica seemed to be becoming a truly international question.

Despite these wider developments, the Anglo-Argentine-Chilean sovereignty dispute continued to play a central role in shaping Antarctic politics.¹ In Argentina,

¹ For example, vacillations in United States policy towards Antarctica can be explained, in large part, by the fact that three of its Cold War allies had conflicting claims to the Antarctic continent. For investigations of US Antarctic policy see, for example, Klotz, *America on the ice: Antarctic policy issues*. Moore, "Tethered to an Iceberg: United States Policy toward the Antarctic, 1939-49." Jason Kendall Moore, "Bungled publicity: Little America big America and the rationale for non-claimancy 1946-61," *Polar Record* 40 (2004). The basic cause of friction between the State Department and the Defense Department was whether the United States should continue to reserve its rights to the entire continent (the Defense position) or whether it should make a claim to the unclaimed sector (the State position). Both policies originated out of differing opinions over the best way to respond to the presence of other “friendly” claims.

the new military government was no less nationalistic than that of Perón, and it continued to pursue an extensive Antarctic program. In Chile, although the government of Carlos Ibañez del Campo paid less attention to the active promotion of *Antártica Chilena*, there was no willingness to give anything away. In both South American countries, Antarctica had become a powerful nationalist symbol, somewhat detached from the material reality of the continent: the question of ownership mattered more, for its own sake, than the potential for finding economic riches. Neither Argentina nor Chile wanted a broad international discussion of Antarctica, which they feared might lead to some form of internationalization of their Antarctic territories. In their desire to keep Antarctica off the agenda of the United Nations, the governments of Buenos Aires and Santiago shared a common cause with Great Britain, which, for its part, had no wish to see Antarctica added to the long list of anti-colonial grievances already being discussed. As a consequence, despite the sometimes bitter dispute, Argentina, Chile, and Great Britain worked in loose alliance to oppose the Indian proposal to raise the Antarctica question at the United Nations. This ability to make a common cause despite disagreements established an important precedent for the future of the southern continent.

Between 1955 and 1957, Britain's commitment to the retention of exclusive political sovereignty in the Falkland Islands Dependencies was, in fact, beginning to wane.² On a global scale, the Suez Crisis of late 1956, and Harold Macmillan's ensuing assumption of the premiership, led to an extensive review of British foreign policy objectives. This review, in turn, preceded an acceleration of the process of

² Ronald Hyam notes that in 1955, the Falkland Islands Dependencies were the only part of the colonial empire in which Anthony Eden would contemplate any form of concession. After discussion, however, no concessions were made. Hyam, *Britain's declining empire: the road to decolonisation, 1918-1968*.

decolonization.³ In Antarctica, Britain's IGY program would become closely tied up with its reevaluation of empire. Before Britain made concessions in any part of the Falkland Islands Dependencies, officials wanted to know the economic potential of the territory they might be losing. The IGY promised to function as an economic survey of Britain's Antarctic possessions, revealing what should be kept and what could be disposed of without loss of resources. On a local level, the Antarctic whaling industry – Britain's principal source of revenue in the region – entered a period of near collapse. Despite the good intentions of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the imposition of quotas, there had been a return to massive over-fishing in the post-war period. Since the beginning of the 1950s, the cost of Britain's presence in Antarctica had exceeded the revenues generated in the region, as Britain had responded to Perón's Antarctic Dream by increasing its activities in the region. The prospective collapse of the whaling industry chipped away at the belief in the economic potential of Antarctica. As increasing scientific research revealed dreams of the continent as a frozen *El Dorado* to be pure fantasies, more and more British politicians and officials began to question the retention of exclusive political sovereignty.

ORIGINS OF THE IGY

The International Geophysical Year originated out of Anglo-American scientific partnership. In April 1950, a group of North American scientists held a

³ As Hopkins demonstrates, the connection between the review and the subsequent acceleration of decolonization is a contentious issue. Macmillan liked to give a pretence of orderly intention to what was often a chaotic uncontrolled affair. See A.G. Hopkins, "Macmillan's Audit of Empire, 1957" in P. F. Clarke and Clive Trebilcock, *Understanding decline : perceptions and realities of British economic performance* (Cambridge ; New York, NY, USA, 1997).

dinner in Silver Spring, Maryland, in honor of the visit of Sydney Chapman, a leading British geophysicist.⁴ Inspired by the suggestions of Lloyd Berkner, a leading figure within the US scientific establishment, the dining scientists came up with the idea of holding a third International Polar Year.⁵ This should take place, they thought, in 1957-58, 25 years after the previous polar year, and during a period of maximum sunspot activity. They argued that advances in many of the world's unanswered geophysical questions required a coordinated international scientific research program on a massive scale, especially in the polar regions. Recent technological advances also offered new opportunities for scientific investigation, many emerging directly from the Second World War.⁶

From its inception, the IGY had significant political undertones. Berkner made his suggestion for holding an International Polar Year at the same time as he was working on a paper entitled "Science and Foreign Relations" for the State Department, and his motivations for holding an International Polar Year were not purely scientific.⁷ The report stated "certain definite benefits which are highly essential to the security and welfare of the US, both generally and with respect to the progress of science, stem from international co-operation and exchange with respect

⁴ Lewis, *A continent for science; the Antarctic adventure*. 62. Sydney Chapman was Sedleian Professor of Natural Philosophy at Queens College, Oxford. He had constructed a model of the earth's atmosphere and the space surrounding it in order to investigate the effects of "outbursts from the sun." See Walter Sullivan, *Assault on the unknown; the International Geophysical Year*, [1st ed. (New York, 1961). 20.

⁵ Previous Polar Years had been held in 1882-1883 and 1932-1933. See <http://classic.ipy.org/development/history.htm> (accessed on 18th February 2007).

⁶ Sullivan, *Assault on the unknown; the International Geophysical Year*. 23.

⁷ See Allan A. Needell, *Science, Cold War and the American state: Lloyd V. Berkner and the balance of professional ideals* (Amsterdam, 2000). 299.

to scientific matters.”⁸ A secret annex to the report added that increased international contacts would offer enhanced opportunities for intelligence gathering.⁹

In the months following the Maryland dinner, the scientists’ ideas became a working project. After lobbying by Berkner and Chapman, the Mixed Commission on the Ionosphere (MCI), an international scientific organization with an interest in the upper atmosphere, endorsed the proposal for an International Polar Year. From the MCI the plans for a Polar Year were taken to other international scientific organizations such as the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics and the World Meteorological Organization, as well as to national scientific academies.¹⁰ In late 1951, the project was approved by the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), an umbrella group for all the world’s major scientific societies, and it was decided to substitute the word “Polar” with “Geophysical.”¹¹ In May 1952, the ICSU Bureau sent out planning invitations to its various component academies, and it established a Special Committee, known as CSAGI, to oversee the organization of IGY.¹² Sydney Chapman was elected President of the Special Committee, Lloyd Berkner Vice President, and Marcel Nicolet, a geophysicist from Belgium, Secretary

⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.* On page 298 Needell writes “Another consideration, more difficult to document, was that by the mid-1950s the capabilities of Soviet science and technology had become a deep and disturbing mystery to American military planners. Enticing the Soviet Union to make public statements and analyzable demonstrations of just what it had been able to accomplish, especially in rocketry, became a high-priority goal of American intelligence organizations.”

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 300.

¹¹ ICSU had been founded at the beginning of the 1930s. It was the third attempt to unify the world’s various scientific unions. It was essentially a non-governmental organization and ran parallel to UNESCO. The decision to change the name to the International Geophysical Year was taken at a meeting in Canberra because there was a feeling that the focus on the polar regions alone was too restrictive. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO), in particular, did not like the exclusive focus on the polar regions. See Sullivan, *Assault on the unknown; the International Geophysical Year*. 26.

¹² The Special Committee was known as CSAGI from its French initials, *Comité Spécial de l’Année Géophysique Internationale*.

General.¹³ The Committee decided upon nine program areas: meteorology, latitude and longitude determinations, geomagnetism, the ionosphere, aurora and airglow, solar activity, cosmic ray, glaciology, oceanography.¹⁴ Although research would be conducted throughout the world, Antarctica and outer space were singled out for special attention.

In late September and early October 1954 a plenary meeting of CSAGI was held in Rome, to which all interested countries sent delegates. The meeting began to make detailed plans for the scientific research of the IGY. At the opening session of the conference, the Soviet Embassy declared that the Soviet Academy of Sciences would participate.¹⁵ The head Russian delegate would be Vladimir V. Belousov, an expert in geotectonics. The inclusion of the Soviet Union brought Cold War rivalries into the heart of the IGY, especially in the field of satellites and space exploration, but it also ensured that the enterprise would be a genuinely worldwide endeavor. Initially, however, the Soviets made no mention of their plans for Antarctica, and they did not send delegates to the meetings discussing plans for Antarctic research. At these meetings, the participating countries made plans to occupy fourteen new sites across Antarctica. Ten of these sites were provisionally allocated and the remaining four were left undecided. With echoes of the heroic era of Antarctic exploration, the conference report proudly stated that the assault on Antarctica was to be “the first really thorough world effort” to uncover the geographic secrets at the

¹³ At a planning meeting in late June and early July 1953.

¹⁴ See Needell, *Science, Cold War and the American state: Lloyd V. Berkner and the balance of professional ideals*. 309.

¹⁵ Sullivan, *Assault on the unknown; the International Geophysical Year*. 29. Two years later the Soviet government would issue a decree giving IGY research priority access to workers, facilities, and instruments

bottom of the world.¹⁶ The delegates decided to re-convene in June 1955, for a conference specifically discussing Antarctica.

The United States had been absent from Antarctica for five years, but the plans for the IGY encouraged the Eisenhower administration to think again about its policy towards the Southern Continent. With the Korean War having ended, the US military once again had resources to spare for Antarctic operations. The IGY offered the United States the opportunity to re-engage with Antarctica in a way that would not directly threaten the sovereignty claims of its Cold War allies.¹⁷ Several high-ranking US officials saw the IGY as an economic survey of the Southern continent. For example, Admiral Duncan, the Navy's representative on the National Security Council, stated "we should carry out our plans to achieve our scientific purposes, but do nothing about establishing claims to Antarctica until we see what is actually revealed about the resources of the area in the course of carrying out our program for the IGY."¹⁸ President Eisenhower supported a continuation of the traditional policy of refusing to recognize any claims to Antarctica, while reserving the sovereign rights of the United States to any part of the continent, although he saw no need to conduct reconnaissance in Antarctica "over and beyond what was required for

¹⁶ Ibid. 30. The conference also selected five other areas to receive special treatment: the Arctic, the equatorial region, and three meridians stretching from pole to pole.

¹⁷ All seven claimant states were part of the Cold War's "Western Alliance": Britain, Argentina, Chile, France, Norway, Australia, and New Zealand.

¹⁸ Memorandum of Discussion at the 272nd Meeting of the NSC, Washington, 12 January 1956. FRUS, 1955-57, Volume 11, United Nations and General Matters. No. 313. (Source: Eisenhower Library, Whitman File, NSC Series. Top Secret. Prepared by Gleason on Jan 13). The State Department also stressed the importance of conducting scientific research before making a claim: "... Perhaps more importantly [than maintaining and extending US rights] such expeditions add to the present meager knowledge of the area and in time will permit a more accurate estimate of its future possibilities. For the present, it is doubtful whether we yet know enough to decide the basic question of how much of Antarctica the US should attempt to acquire." Suggested reply to letter from Representative Charles E. Bennett regarding US policy in Antarctica, 24 February 1955. USNA, 702.022/2-1755.

scientific purposes.”¹⁹ If the United States were going to upset its allies by making overlapping claims, officials reasoned, it should at least first make sure that these claims were worth making: scientific investigations would show which parts, if any, were economically valuable. US scientists, eager to receive government funding, were keen to play up the potential economic and political utility of their work: Berkner, for example, stressed the defense related research of the program, under which he included meteorology, upper atmosphere research, and electronic communications.²⁰ Perhaps most importantly, in the grand strategy of the Cold War, US officials believed, perhaps somewhat naively, that participation in the IGY, with its rhetorical shield of science, offered the possibility that renewed US presence in Antarctica might not provoke a Soviet response.²¹ The United States was keen that the Cold War should not spread southwards, but they wanted to ensure their piece of the frozen pie.

In Britain, leading scientists had been behind the IGY from its inception, and occupied leading roles in the leadership of CSAGI.²² As insiders to the project, the British scientific establishment strongly supported an impressive showing. Officials in the government, while generally supportive of the IGY, had two different visions

¹⁹ Memorandum of Discussion at the 272nd Meeting of the NSC, Washington, 12 January 1956. FRUS, 1955-57, Volume 11, United Nations and General Matters. No. 313. (Source: Eisenhower Library, Whitman File, NSC Series. Top Secret. Prepared by Gleason on Jan 13).

²⁰ See Needell, *Science, Cold War and the American state: Lloyd V. Berkner and the balance of professional ideals*. 214.

²¹ Several NSC Papers from the mid-1950s concerning Antarctica had this as their major policy objective. See, for example, National Security Council Report, NSC 5424/1, 19 July 1954. NSA, Presidential Directives PD00414.

²² Not only was Sydney Chapman the President of CSAGI, but in 1956 the CSAGI Bureau appointed Vice Admiral Sir Archibald Day, recently retired as the Royal Navy’s Hydrographer, to be the IGY coordinator. Immediately before its start, Chapman described the IGY as the “greatest example of world wide co-operation in the history of our race” and Prince Philip gave a television lecture on the importance of the project. Sullivan, *Assault on the unknown; the International Geophysical Year*. 35 and 48.

of its purpose. Along with high-ranking officials in the United States, many British officials viewed the enterprise as a vast economic survey of Antarctica.²³ Not enough was known about the economic potential of the continent, they argued, to make a rational decision about whether or not to maintain some or all of Britain's sovereignty claims. This group generally favored the plan for a large-scale aerial survey of the Falkland Islands Dependencies.²⁴ A second group of officials drew on the traditional imperial connection between science and empire and viewed the IGY as an opportunity to demonstrate Britain's continued scientific authority on an international stage, in order to prove once and for all the validity of Britain's claims to the region.²⁵ This group strongly supported Sir Vivian Fuchs' idea of a trans-Antarctic expedition. This expedition would complete Ernest Shackleton's shattered dream of crossing the entire Antarctic continent without ever having to leave territory claimed by the British Commonwealth. The proponents of a strong scientific showing also supported the establishment by the Royal Society of a base on the coast of the Weddell Sea, close to where General Pujato had recently established Base Belgrano. The majority of British officials fell somewhere between these two positions and supported the strengthening of British title at the same time as assessing whether that title was worth the trouble.

In contrast to the United States and Great Britain, Argentina and Chile were less enthusiastic about IGY research in Antarctica. The proposals for open scientific access to all parts of the continent appeared to undermine their sovereignty claims. Both countries worried that, in the words of Chile's General Cañas, "beneath the

²³ *Future Constitutional Development in the Colonies*. May 1957. TNA, CAB 134/1551.

²⁴ P. G. Mott, *Wings over ice: an account of the Falkland Islands and Dependencies Aerial Survey Expedition 1955-57* (Long Sutton, 1986).

²⁵ For a discussion of the connections between science and empire see "Introduction."

appearance of a scientific meeting a political process is in march,” and both feared that the Soviet Union might establish hostile bases in the region.²⁶ They also continued to make references to the “colonial activities” of Great Britain in Antarctica, which included British science.²⁷ At the time of the planning meetings in late 1954 and 1955, Argentina was going through a period of political instability that would culminate in the overthrow of Perón. This uncertainty took attention away from the Antarctic. The recent acquisition of an icebreaker and Pujato’s expedition to the Weddell Sea had demonstrated that Argentina could more than hold its own in any display of scientific strength. Nevertheless, there was little enthusiasm for a project that could potentially undermine Argentina’s sovereignty rights.

In Chile, mistrust of the IGY was greater still. Chilean politicians shared Argentina’s legitimate fears that the IGY had underlying political motivations. Additionally, unlike Argentina, and as Julio Escudero had consistently maintained, Chile could not compete in a straight scientific contest with its rivals in Antarctica.²⁸ Chile lacked the economic resources and scientific expertise to conduct scientific research on a similar scale to either Britain or Argentina, and it could certainly not compete with the United States or Soviet Union. At the CSAGI meeting in Rome, Chile had not been present at the Antarctic planning sessions, and before the Paris planning meeting had still not formed an IGY National Commission. On 27 May 1955, the Chilean Antarctic Commission met to discuss whether Chile should send a

²⁶ Reunión de la Comisión Chilena Antártica, 27 May 1955. RR.EE., Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.

²⁷ See for example, American Embassy Santiago to Department of State, March 14 1955. USNA, 702.022/3-1455.

²⁸ Julio Escudero had argued this point several years earlier while putting forward his plans for a *modus vivendi*. See Chapter 5, “Antarctic Detente.”

delegation to the upcoming Paris Conference.²⁹ However, by this stage, the momentum behind the IGY was such that it would have been difficult and politically disadvantageous for Chile to remain on the outside. Señor Melo, the Foreign Minister, noted how scientific decisions could have political consequences, and argued that Chile needed to be on the inside.³⁰ General Cañas was another proponent of participation.³¹ Convinced by these arguments, the Chileans decided to attend the Paris meeting, but they petitioned for a delay in order to allow them to prepare their program. This was granted and the Paris meeting was pushed back to July.

THE CONFERENCE OF PARIS

In early July 1955, representatives from twelve nations met in Paris to discuss plans for the Antarctic section of the IGY. Georges Laclavère, a French Colonel with a strong personality, was elected chairman. At the opening session, to the apparent surprise of the assembled delegates, Laclavère announced that the Soviet Union intended to send an expedition to Antarctica as part of the IGY. If US officials had seriously expected to be able to keep the Soviet Union out of Antarctica, they had failed.³² The IGY in fact offered the Soviets an excellent opportunity to get directly involved with the science and politics of the Antarctica

²⁹ Reunión de la Comisión Chilena Antártica, 27 May 1955. RR.EE., “Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.”

³⁰ Ministerio de RR.EE. Concurrencia de Chile a la Conferencia Antártica de París, 20 May 1955. RR.EE., “Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.”

³¹ Reunión de la Comisión Chilena Antártica, 27 May 1955. “RR.EE., Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.”

³² Although exclusion of the USSR was one of the central tenets of official US policy towards Antarctica – as revealed in several NSC documents – one of the broader political motivations for the IGY was to force Russia to display its scientific expertise. See, Needell, *Science, Cold War and the American state: Lloyd V. Berkner and the balance of professional ideals*.

continent. From their activities in Siberia and the Arctic, Soviet scientists already had vast experience of polar conditions.³³ From the late 1940s, the Soviet Government had started to show an increasing interest in the Southern Continent, through whaling expeditions and declarations of interest.³⁴ The IGY offered the Soviet Union a world stage upon which to show off its scientific and technological prowess. Given the IGY's emphasis on Antarctic research, it seemed only natural that the Soviets would want to participate.

Three days into the meeting, Dr. Belousov, the head Soviet Union's IGY program, arrived. He apologized for his lateness and declared that the Soviet Union would participate fully in IGY research in Antarctica. He added that the Soviets would build a base at the South Pole. This suggestion caused a stir among all the other delegates, since the United States had already stated its intention to build a base at the world's most southerly point. Oscar Pinochet de la Barra, a member of the Chilean delegation, recalled that a pin could have been heard dropping in the conference room.³⁵ In a moment of quick thinking Belousov changed his country's plans: if the South Pole were already occupied, then the Soviet Union would build a base at what he called the "Pole of Relative Inaccessibility" – the point in the continent furthest from any ocean. The Russians could trump their Cold War rivals

³³ With the possible exception of Norway, the Soviet Union probably had more experience in polar regions than any other country with interests in Antarctica.

³⁴ For example, in June 1950, the Soviet Union had issued a statement setting forth its interest in Antarctic affairs and demanding to be included in "any international consideration of that area." See, State Department Memorandum of Conversation, 9 June 1950. USNA, 702.022/6-850. The US Embassy in London discussed the reasons for the Soviet declaration: "Foreign Office has no idea what inspired Russian note or what next steps Russians contemplate. Cecil felt that remote possibility might be carefully worded resolution, suggesting some form trusteeship, for GA since current Russian tactics vis-a-vis Latins seem to include fomenting Latins' anti-colonial sentiments and USSR has always had greater success in Assembly's Fourth Committee than elsewhere." United States Embassy London to Secretary of State. 19 June 1950. USNA, 702.00/6-1950.

³⁵ Pinochet de la Barra, *Medio siglo de recuerdos antárticos: memorias*. 82.

for sheer scientific and technological bravado, even if the South Pole had already been taken.

Throughout the meeting in Paris, the Chilean delegation, along with that of Argentina, sought to establish a clear distinction between IGY scientific research and politics in Antarctica.³⁶ Early in the meeting, Argentina and Chile proposed a motion stating that none of the scientific research conducted as part of the IGY should have any implications for questions of sovereignty in Antarctica. Initially, Laclavère rejected such a proposal.³⁷ He argued that even such a negative motion would bring politics into what was essentially a scientific organization. But the Argentine and Chilean delegations remained insistent, and they also drew upon the rhetoric of science to argue that lurking political considerations would jeopardize the scientific integrity of the IGY. Although neither South American government was happy to see the spread of communism to the Southern Continent, the Soviet presence at the Paris meeting in some ways played into their hands.³⁸ The other “free world” delegations feared the consequences of the Soviet Union using its IGY activity to stake a sovereignty claim to the continent, and the South American proposal seemed to offer at least a token gesture against such a prospect. The meeting therefore established a “Gentleman’s Agreement” by which none of the research and activity of the IGY would have any bearing on the question of Antarctic sovereignty.

Despite this success, both Argentina and Chile remained suspicious of the IGY, and worried about the increasing Soviet presence in Antarctica. Writing from

³⁶ Ibid. 80-84.

³⁷ Sullivan, *Assault on the unknown; the International Geophysical Year*. 293.

³⁸ Miguel Echenique Zegers, Ministro Consejero al Señor Ministro de RR.EE., 26 September 1955. RR.EE., “Conferencias Antárticas A.G.I., 1955-56.”

Paris, Miguel Echenique Zegers, counselor to the Chilean Minister of Foreign Relations, noted ominously:

This Russian interest in Antarctica is of great importance to us, because it is a powerful element that enters into the game with respect to the United States and Great Britain, the latter of which we consider, above all, as our principal adversary in those regions. Although, at the moment, the Russian bases are very far from our own, it would not be strange if tomorrow they built inland stations inside our sector. This would not be extraordinary considering that the great powers have encountered a formula of “acting in the name of science” in order to take possession of Antarctica... It is clear that the bases solicited now by the Soviet Union are but the beginning of a series.³⁹

For the time being, Britain remained the “principal threat” to Chile’s Antarctic claims, but the Soviet Union represented a much more hostile adversary looming ever larger. For their parts, Britain and the United States worried about the Soviet presence in Antarctica, but they also hoped that this threat could be used to make Argentina and Chile more compliant and less dogmatic in their sovereignty claims.⁴⁰ In this way the stage was set for a dangerous game of bluff and double-bluff, throughout which science would be used to play out political intentions.

INDIA AND THE UNITED NATIONS

On 17 February 1956, Arthur Lall, India’s permanent representative to the United Nations, circulated a letter to the Secretary General asking for the question of Antarctica to be raised as an item on the provisional agenda of the eleventh session

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ The Soviet presence also worried Britain and the United States. See, for example, Edwin D. Crowley (BNA) to various internal State Department recipients, 30 September 1955. USNA 702.022/9-3055.

of the General Assembly.⁴¹ The initial proposal contained no explanatory memorandum, but at a meeting with the other Commonwealth Delegations in New York, Lall said that he thought some form of United Nations Trusteeship was a possibility.⁴² The Indian representative told his Commonwealth colleagues that the current interest in Antarctica generated by the IGY was one reason for the proposed UN debate; another was the question of the various territorial claims that existed there.

The leading figure behind the Indian proposal was Krishna Menon, a veteran anti-colonial campaigner who was continually looking for new ways to challenge European imperialism. Until recently, Menon had served as India's permanent representative to the United Nations, and at the General Assembly meeting to be held in November he would be the head of the Indian delegation.⁴³ Educated in India and England, Krishna Menon had been a staunch member of the British Labour Party's left wing, with close associations with the British Parliamentary Group for World Government.⁴⁴ He had played a leading role in championing Indian independence and had been rewarded by Nehru with a leading position in India's Foreign Service. Menon had a reputation as a skilled diplomat, but someone who was difficult to work with – a reputation that his proposal to raise the Antarctic question at the United Nations did nothing to diminish. The British Commonwealth Relations Office

⁴¹ United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations to Foreign Office, 21 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [online]. In 1940 Menon had been expelled from the Labour Party due to his close connections with the Indian independence movement.

⁴⁴ J.S. Whitehead Minute, 25 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835. The World Government Group in the British Parliament showed a particular interest in the creation of an international regime for Antarctica. See also M.C.G. Man Minute, 7 May 1956. TNA, FO 371/119836. Another member of this group was Edward Shackleton, the son of the famous polar explorer. Whitehead Minute, 31 May 1956. TNA, FO 371/119836.

suggested that Menon was making this move at this time for lack of any other cause to champion at the United Nations.⁴⁵ “This is quite a good selection,” one official wryly noted, “since it will cause the maximum amount of irritation to the largest possible number of countries.”⁴⁶ The Foreign Office branded Menon and his colleagues “professional mischief makers.”⁴⁷ If Menon’s main intention had been to cause trouble, he had certainly succeeded.

The British government privately fumed at the Indian proposal to raise the Antarctic question at the United Nations. “This raises all sorts of problems” was the first response of Morgan Man, the Foreign Office official with responsibility for Antarctic affairs.⁴⁸ A day later he added that a debate in the United Nations “might cause us all a lot of trouble and embarrassment and give the Russians a splendid opportunity for mischief making.”⁴⁹ A minute by I.F.S. Vincent set out Britain’s main objections to the Indian proposal:

(i) HMG has steadfastly refused for several years to accept the idea that territories over which they have sovereign rights should be submitted to UN control.

(ii) Important discussions are going on with the United States and interested Commonwealth Governments, which we hope will lead to a territorial settlement in Antarctica. These negotiations may, however, take several months, and we should not want them interrupted.

⁴⁵ Man Minute, 20 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835. This assumption was confirmed in a conversation between Lall and an official from the State Department’s United Nations Department. Lall confirmed “the genesis of the idea had in fact been Indian determination to play a more active and leading role at the General Assembly this year than last.” See, British Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, 12 March 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

⁴⁶ R.L.D. Jaspar (CRO), 20 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

⁴⁷ Pink Memo, 20 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

⁴⁸ Man Minute, 20 February 1956. TNA, FO371/119835.

⁴⁹ C.G. Man to Muirhead (British Embassy Washington D.C.), 21 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

(iii) With increasing exploration of the Antarctic continent, new strategic possibilities and dangers are becoming apparent. Bases on the continent could threaten Atlantic and Pacific sea routes and could affect the stability of e.g. Argentine or South African defense. Mr. Dulles has also referred to the possibility of “weather control.”

(iv) The one point on which all territorial claimants are agreed is that Russia must be kept out.⁵⁰

Vincent suggested that action should be taken to persuade India not to ventilate the subject at the United Nations. At the same time he saw a need “to educate public opinion as to the reasons for His Majesty’s Government’s unwillingness to entertain the trusteeship proposal.”⁵¹ Man added that it should be pointed out to the Indians that the idea of UN Trusteeship in Antarctica was quite inappropriate, since the “whole object of trusteeship is to safeguard interests of local inhabitants who do not exist in this case.”

Perhaps most annoying to Britain, Australia, and New Zealand was the fact that India had not consulted its Commonwealth partners before writing to the United Nations.⁵² At a meeting of Commonwealth Delegations at the United Nations four days after the initial Indian proposal, representatives of Britain, Australia, and New Zealand expressed their unhappiness that the Indians had made such a move without prior discussion.⁵³ The British delegation reported to London: “My Australian and

⁵⁰ I.F.S. Vincent minute, 22 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835. In a later minute Vincent added more British objections to the Indian proposal, including “We want to avoid a general resolution on Antarctica which might inhibit us later from taking action against Argentina and Chile in defense of our rights.” IFS Vincent minute. 7 September 1956. TNA, FO 371/119838.

⁵¹ I.F.S. Vincent minute, 22 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

⁵² R.L.D. Jaspar (CRO) minute, 20 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

⁵³ The affair would later raise niggling questions about the question of “two-tier” consultation within the Commonwealth, with Britain and the former White Dominions maintaining much closer contacts with each other than with the newer members of the Club. See Commonwealth Relations Office to J.V. Rob (New Delhi), 1 March 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

New Zealand colleagues with whom I briefly discussed the position after the meeting felt as I did that the ventilation in the United Nations of any ideas such as a possible trusteeship over Antarctica might be seriously at variance with the objectives of the discussions proceeding between the Americans, ourselves, and the Old Commonwealth.”⁵⁴ However, the members of the self-proclaimed “Old Commonwealth” found themselves constrained in the extent to which they could oppose India. Diplomats pointed out that Britain was reliant upon support from India in other areas of the world, particularly in Cyprus, and suggested that open opposition to the inscription of the item on the agenda of the Eleventh General Assembly would cause unnecessary friction. The Commonwealth Relations Office advised that Britain should not react too sharply, but “should concentrate on lining up those interested.”⁵⁵ The interested countries included both Argentina and Chile.

The reactions of Argentina and Chile, the two claimant nations in dispute with Great Britain, were equally indignant. Shortly after the Indian proposal *La Unión* newspaper of Valparaíso declared on behalf of the Chilean government, “Chile would not accept the Indian proposition.”⁵⁶ In late February the Chilean delegation in New Delhi officially protested the Indian move, on the grounds that it was “a matter within the field of Chilean sovereignty.”⁵⁷ The Argentine government was slower to respond, but it soon became clear that the two South American countries would take a united stand at the United Nations to oppose the discussion of Antarctica.⁵⁸ At a meeting of the Latin American Caucus held on February 29, 1953,

⁵⁴ United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations to Foreign Office, 21 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

⁵⁵ R.L.D. Jaspar (CRO) minute, 20 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

⁵⁶ *La Unión*, 22 February 1956. “Chile no acepta una proposición de la India sobre Antártica.”

⁵⁷ UK High Commissioner in India to Foreign Office, 27 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

⁵⁸ British Embassy Buenos Aires to Foreign Office, 1 March 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

the delegates of Argentina and Chile requested full support for opposition to the inscription of the Indian item onto the General Assembly's agenda.⁵⁹ The Nicaraguan representative reported to the United States that he thought, "almost all Latin American delegations would back up Chilean-Argentine request." However, the Mexican delegate spoke for several members of the caucus when he stated that, while he felt sympathy with the South Americans' request, it had been Mexico's traditional policy that "any country had the right to inscribe any item."⁶⁰ Therefore, despite the widespread support, Chile and Argentina were not guaranteed the backing of all the members of the Latin American bloc.

In comparison to the British Commonwealth and South American reactions, the United States responded more ambivalently to the Indian proposal.⁶¹ US officials dismissed as "mere speculation" a British suggestion that the Soviet Union was behind the Indian proposal.⁶² Instead the North Americans took the Indian proposal at face value and saw it as offering both advantages and disadvantages to US policy in Antarctica. On the one hand, an open debate in the United Nations threatened to circumscribe the United States' much vaunted freedom of action in the Antarctic, and conflicted "with the spirit, if not the letter" of the United States' latest policy

⁵⁹ US Delegation to United Nations to Secretary of State, 1 March 1956. USNA 702.022/3-156.

⁶⁰ In fact the British representative at the United Nations later suggested that an additional advantage of opposing inscription in alliance with the Latin American Caucus would be that it would "strike a blow at the arguments used by some Latin American delegations that, on principle, all items should be inscribed." UK Delegation to UN to Foreign Office, 25 May 1956. TNA, FO 371/119836.

⁶¹ For a general discussion of the US response, see, for example, Office Memorandum from Strong (ODA) to Crowley (BNA), 8 March 1956. USNA, 702.022/3-856.

⁶² "[It] cannot be excluded that the Russians have put the Indians up to this, since they must be well aware that their chances of obtaining a foot-hold in the Southern Continent are slim, unless they can cover up their motive by propaganda and other means." I.F.S. Vincent minutes, 22 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835. For the US response, see Merchant (EUR) to Under Secretary, 24 February 1956. USNA, 702.022/2-2456.

statement on Antarctica.⁶³ An Operations Coordinating Board memorandum referred ominously to the possibility that Antarctica “might later be a most valuable site for manufacturing and processing of a dangerous nature,” adding that “internationalization could preclude this type of activity.”⁶⁴ Discussion at the United Nations also presented the danger that the dispute between Britain, Argentina, and Chile – three important Cold War allies – would get a very public airing to the benefit of communist propaganda. On the other hand, the possibility of some form of United Nations Trusteeship for Antarctica offered the United States a way out of the political impasse in Antarctica, both domestic and international. Domestically, a favorable United Nations resolution on the internationalization of Antarctica offered a way of overcoming the difference of opinion between the State Department and Defense Departments by presenting both with a *fait accompli*. Internationally, the United Nations offered a way of forcing its disputing allies to resolve their differences while retaining some form of US influence in the region. Therefore, despite the potential dangers raised by debate at the United Nations, the United States had very little incentive to upset India by openly opposing inscription.

The Soviet Union had nothing to lose through an international debate of the “Antarctic Question” since its policy centered upon making sure that it was not shut out of the decision making process in the southern continent. Although it did little actively to promote the Indian proposal, it was taken for granted that the Eastern bloc would vote for inscription. The Soviet Union was happy to sit back and watch its Cold War rivals squabble.

⁶³ NSC5424/1. NSA, Presidential Directives PD00414.

⁶⁴ OCB Memorandum, included in Office Memorandum from Strong (ODA) to Crowley (BNA), 8 March 1956. USNA 702.022/3-856.

As claimant countries, France and Norway were the only other countries with a direct interest in the Indian proposal. The French government took a position of quiet opposition, part of a solid Western European bloc that the British believed they could count on to oppose inscription. The government of Norway was more vocal in raising its objections, and the Norwegians worked hard to form a united Scandinavian bloc to oppose inscription.⁶⁵ They hoped that such an approach “would start a snowball of opposition” which would make the Indians drop the item. Few other countries showed much interest in the Indian proposal. British diplomats at the United Nations calculated that most governments would follow their traditional voting patterns, with the Afro-Asian countries and the Eastern bloc firmly behind the Indians and with most other countries willing to follow any lead taken by the Western powers. If it were to come to a straight vote on inscription the initial odds favored India, especially if the United States remained non-committal.⁶⁶

The Indians appear to have been genuinely shocked at the level of hostility generated by their proposal, particularly among the Latin Americans. They soon abandoned the idea of United Nations trusteeship for Antarctica and replaced it with a vague notion of “peaceful utilization.”⁶⁷ In an attempt to steer the item away from the vexed question of sovereignty, the Indians highlighted their fears of nuclear weapons testing in Antarctica as the main reason for wanting to raise the question of Antarctica at the United Nations.⁶⁸ They feared that such tests would alter the

⁶⁵ British Embassy Oslo to Foreign Office, 25 June 1956. TNA, FO 371/119836.

⁶⁶ For a detailed analysis of probable voting intentions see UK Delegation to United Nations (Crosthwaite) to Foreign Office, 14 August 1956. TNA, FO 371/119838.

⁶⁷ According to a report by the Australian High Commissioner in New Delhi, the Indians had dropped the idea of Trusteeship within a week of first making their proposal. UK High Commission in India to Foreign Office, 24 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

⁶⁸ For example, this was the line taken by Nehru in a debate in the Lok Sabha on 14 April, 1956. Debate in Indian Parliament (Lok Sabha) 14 April 1956. TNA, FO 371/119836.

climate of the Southern Hemisphere to the detriment of India.⁶⁹ The Indians suggested that even if the British themselves had no intention to test hydrogen bombs, the Commonwealth countries would not stand in the way of the United States conducting tests.⁷⁰ When drafts of the Indian explanatory memorandum were finally circulated, the Indians made a veiled reference to nuclear testing:

Modern science is likely to reveal many possibilities for the peaceful utilization of a region hitherto regarded as unproductive. At the same time the influence of the Antarctica [sic] on the climatic and related conditions throughout the world, while obviously considerable, requires further study. Any disturbance of the equilibrium of natural forces in this area might lead to incalculable consequences for the world as a whole involving the animal and plant life. In view of these facts and bearing in mind the size of the area, its international importance and the growing interest in it, the Government of India consider that in order to strengthen universal peace it would be appropriate and timely for all nations to agree and to affirm that the area will be utilized entirely for peaceful purposes and for the general welfare. All nations should agree further to harmonize their actions to this end and to ensure also that no activities in the Antarctica [sic] will adversely affect climatic and other natural conditions.⁷¹

This represented a subtle challenge to the British Empire's justification of its sovereignty in Antarctica through environmental authority. The Indians implied that rather than safeguarding the natural environment, existing political arrangements in the Southern Continent in fact threatened to adversely disrupt global climate systems. Fears of nuclear testing in Antarctica were not without precedent. In

⁶⁹ See, for example, UK Delegation at United Nations to Foreign Office, 28 March 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835. The Indians mentioned their fears of nuclear testing to the North Americans: Memorandum of Conversation (between Lall and Samuel dePalma), 5 March 1956. USNA, 702.022/3-556. Menon appears to have put the question most dramatically, speaking of "blowing off the ice-cap."

⁷⁰ UK Delegation at United Nations to Foreign Office, 1 March 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

⁷¹ UK Delegation at United Nations to Man, 26 July 1956. TNA, FO 371/119838.

February 1955 a Soviet newspaper article had suggested that United States was interested in Antarctica for the purposes of testing nuclear weapons.⁷² By March these rumors had spread to Santiago, where the left-leaning press published articles that claimed that Great Britain wanted to test a hydrogen bomb in Antarctica.⁷³ Although these reports appear to have been malicious rumor, some British officials did indeed consider the possibility that Antarctica might be useful for atomic weapons testing.⁷⁴ They were not prepared to make any commitments to the Indians for fear of further limiting areas available for nuclear tests.⁷⁵

Britain responded to India's challenge to its scientific legitimacy by attempting to reassert its scientific authority, while at the same time trying to undermine Indian scientific credentials. The Foreign Office referred Indian fears about nuclear testing in Antarctica to the Atomic Energy Authority.⁷⁶ A year earlier, British nuclear scientists had considered the question of Soviet nuclear testing in the Arctic. Noting that it would take at least 100,000 tons of uranium 235 to melt all the ice at the North Pole, and that a single atomic bomb contains only a "matter of kilograms of this material," they responded that Indian fears about blowing off the Antarctic icecap were "scientific rubbish."⁷⁷ In writing to the UN Department to

⁷² United States Embassy Moscow to Department of State, 7 February 1955. USNA, 702.022/2-755.

⁷³ United States Embassy Santiago to Department of State, 14 March 1955. USNA 702.022/3-1455. By mid-1956, Chilean rumors suggested that the United States had a nuclear weapon so powerful that it could only be tested in Antarctica. Rudecindo Ortega (Embajador de Chile a la N.U.) al Ministro de RR.EE., 17 August 1956. RR.EE., "Utilización Pacífica de la Antártida."

⁷⁴ For example, in a Foreign Office minute concerning an approach to the United States regarding the Indian suggestion, J.D. Murray noted that "there is presumably the possibility that we might in future wish to use the area ourselves for nuclear tests." J.D. Murray Minute, 15 May 1956. TNA, FO 371/119836.

⁷⁵ D.V. Bendall Minute, 25 June 1956. TNA, FO 371/119836.

⁷⁶ R.A. Thompson (Atomic Energy Authority) to Wilson (FO), 7 March 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

⁷⁷ The scientists at the Atomic Energy Authority had also suggested that even "if all the ice at the North Pole were to be melted, the depth of the oceans of the world would be increased by only about 2.5 inches."

inform them of the scientific conclusions a Foreign Office official claimed “there is, of course, much more ice at the North Pole than at the South.” Less than two years later, IGY research would reveal that this British assertion was itself “scientific rubbish,” but at the time it was a statement of the best available scientific opinion.⁷⁸ Confident in their own scientific misconceptions, British officials challenged India’s lack of knowledge of Antarctica.⁷⁹ The British also claimed that India’s proposal to discuss Antarctica at the United Nations threatened to undermine the already high level of international co-operation going on as part of the IGY. If India really wanted to contribute positively to the future of the Southern Continent, British officials insinuated, they should send scientists to Antarctica (at no small expense) to participate in the international research program.

Even if Indian fears of the consequences of nuclear testing in Antarctica were fantastical, their proposal to raise the Antarctic question at the United Nations still represented a real threat to Britain’s position in Antarctica, as well as those of Australia and New Zealand. Commonwealth officials toyed with inoffensive ways of getting the Indians to withdraw their proposal or to make it less potentially damaging to their sovereignty claims. One suggestion was to constrain the debate to a discussion of United Nations funding for the World Meteorological Organization’s IGY data collection center.⁸⁰ But despite India’s newfound interest in Antarctica’s

⁷⁸ Widespread echo-sounding experiments conducted by the United States during the IGY would reveal the Antarctic ice cap to be an average of several kilometers thick, rather than the several hundred meters that had previously been thought. This had tremendous implications for thinking about the past and current climate trends as it appeared to show that northern and southern hemispheres did not necessarily demonstrate that same warming and cooling trends. The results also led to an increase in the estimates of the amount of water in the world by 10 percent. See John C. Behrendt, *Innocents on the ice : a memoir of Antarctic exploration, 1957* (Niwot, Colo, 1998).

⁷⁹ UK High Commission in India to Foreign Office, 24 February 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

⁸⁰ G. Jockel (Geneva) to Department of External Affairs (Canberra), 10 April 1956. TNA, FO371/119836.

weather and climate, this idea came to nothing. Attempts to convince India that the United States was not planning nuclear tests in Antarctica similarly failed to convince India to withdraw its proposal.⁸¹ At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Meeting, June/July 1956, attempts were made to persuade Nehru that, in relation to the Anglo-Argentine-Chilean tensions in the Antarctic Peninsula, “there has seldom been a more peaceful dispute between nations than this one.”⁸² But Nehru was unreceptive to this argument and had “nothing to say” when the British Foreign Minister raised the Antarctic question with him.⁸³

It quickly became apparent that the only way to get the Indians to back down would be to suggest that they might be defeated in a vote on inscription. Commonwealth opposition to India was made more difficult by their reliance on Indian support in other areas of the world, particularly in Cyprus, and in the possible need “to sabotage quietly any efforts [the communists] make to secure an undesirably large expansion of the Security Council and E.C.O.S.O.C. [Economic and Social Council].”⁸⁴ Several departments within the Foreign Office advised against opposing the Indians at all, but others, led by the United Nations department, argued that the wisest course would be to attempt to block inscription.⁸⁵ Given this precarious diplomatic balancing act, British officials thought that it would be best to

⁸¹ United States Embassy Canberra to Secretary of State, 13 April 1956. USNA, 702.022/4-1356.

⁸² The briefing notes included the fact that the British, Argentines and Chilean personnel living in the Antarctic Peninsula regularly played football matches against one another. Brief for the Secretary of State (CRO) Commonwealth Prime Ministers Meeting –Antarctica, June 1956. TNA, FO 371/119836.

⁸³ Jasper to P.H. Corner (New Zealand House), 6 July 1956. TNA, FO 371/119837.

⁸⁴ Crosthwaite (UN) to Man (FO), 14 August 1956. TNA, FO 371/119838.

⁸⁵ The head of the UK delegation stated that he felt a “strong disinclination to let the Indians get away with a mischievous and harmful proposal by failing to let them know the state of our real feelings because we don’t want to risk opposing them.” UK Delegation to UN to Foreign Office, 25 May 1956. TNA, FO 371/119836.

rely upon Argentina and Chile to take the lead in opposing the Indian proposal, despite being rivals in the Antarctic Peninsula. As the British Embassy in Buenos Aires pointed out, such co-operation was only possible due to the overthrow of Perón in the previous year, and the consequent scaling back of Argentina's antagonistic foreign policy, especially in Antarctica.⁸⁶ The British representative at the United Nations stressed that it would be impossible to defeat inscription without the support from the Latin American caucus.⁸⁷ At a meeting held at the Commonwealth Relations Office on 24 August, 1956, there was general agreement that "the Latin Americans should if possible be encouraged to lead the opposition to inscription in New York," with the added consideration that "it was clearly wisest that the UK should not play a prominent part."⁸⁸

Despite Indian claims that Argentina and Chile were softening their attitude towards a United Nations' debate on Antarctica, the two South American governments in fact continued to oppose the proposal.⁸⁹ In their attempt to defeat the inscription of the item, Chile and Argentina were happy to cooperate, at a distance, with the Commonwealth countries.⁹⁰ Alongside their appeal to the Latin American Caucus, the Argentines and Chileans also lobbied the Indian Government directly. They suggested that the Indian item was endangering a vague notion of "third world"

⁸⁶ Evans (British Ambassador to Buenos Aires) to Foreign Office, 8 May 1956. TNA, FO371/119829.

⁸⁷ UK Delegation to United Nations to Foreign Office, 25 May 1956. TNA, FO371/119836.

⁸⁸ Record of Meeting held at the Commonwealth Relations Office, 24 August 1956. TNA, FO 371/119838.

⁸⁹ Man Minute, 11 May 1956. TNA, FO 371/119836.

⁹⁰ Although communication between the two sides remained limited and indirect, both sides made clear to each other that they were opposing India. For example, the Foreign Office, through the Commonwealth Relations Office, let the Australians know that they should tell the Chileans that Commonwealth governments did not believe "a discussion in the United Nations would be useful at this stage." Man (FO) to Jasper (CRO), 1 May, 1956. TNA, FO 371/119835.

solidarity, by forcing the Latin Americans to diverge from their traditional policy of voting for the inscription of any debate. The most colorful example of Latin American Antarctic diplomacy came in the person of Miguel Serrano, the Chilean representative in India. A poet and a mystic, Serrano had traveled to Antarctica on board the first official Chilean expedition to the southern continent in 1947. He was an unrepentant Nazi sympathizer who fostered the myth that Adolf Hitler had fled from Germany in 1945 to a secret bunker in Antarctica, which had been established by the German Antarctic expedition of 1938-39.⁹¹ In India, he enjoyed a good relationship with Nehru, and, some suggested, an inappropriately good relationship with Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi.⁹² Serrano attempted to use these connections to influence the Indian Prime Minister against inscription of the Antarctic item.⁹³

For all Miguel Serrano's personal diplomacy and direct appeals to the Indian Government, what really mattered was the threat that the South American Caucus, together with the Old Commonwealth and Western Europe, would raise enough votes to defeat a vote on inscription and thereby embarrass India. The Chileans and the Argentines both did their own lobbying and calculations in New York, and they realized that a vote on inscription would be a close contest.⁹⁴ On 13 September, at a meeting of the Latin American Caucus, the two South American claimant nations "argued violently" against inscription of the Indian item.⁹⁵ The caucus agreed that its president, Ambassador Trujillo, from Ecuador, should approach Arthur Lall and

⁹¹ This is described in Serrano, *La Antártica y otros mitos*.

⁹² Pinochet de la Barra, *Medio siglo de recuerdos antárticos: memorias*. 86.

⁹³ Miguel Serrano's efforts against inscription are described in detail in RR.EE., "Utilización Pacífica de la Antártica."

⁹⁴ See, for example, Rudecindo Ortega, Embajador de Chile a las NN.UU. al Ministro de RR.EE., 17 August 1956. RR.EE., "Utilización Pacífica de la Antártida."

⁹⁵ US Delegation to United Nations to Secretary of State, 14 September 1956. USNA, 702.022/9-1456.

advise him against pressing the matter. However, India's permanent representative failed to reply to the Latin Americans and two weeks later the Caucus met again. This time they authorized Trujillo to tell Lall officially that the twenty Latin American countries would vote against inscription.⁹⁶ For a moment, it appeared that this approach had convinced the Indians to drop their item, but then Trujillo overplayed his hand. The Ecuadorian diplomat announced India's decision to the Latin American press, and this breach of confidence caused the Indians to renege on their promise to withdraw the "Peaceful Utilization of Antarctica" item from the General Assembly's agenda.

Up until the last moment the United States remained adamant that, while it saw "no need for discussing Antarctica in the United Nations at this time," it would not oppose inscription.⁹⁷ Referring to the 1956 Presidential elections, British officials guessed, "no new President of the United States (whether Eisenhower or Stevenson) would want to start off by offending India."⁹⁸ However, the united Latin American bloc put considerable pressure on the United States to oppose inscription. The North Americans faced a stark choice between offending India and offending their Latin American neighbors. On 5 November, Ware Adams, the State Department's Director of United Nations Political and Security Affairs, wrote to the US Mission in New York informing them that official policy had been changed and that the United States would oppose inscription. The United Nations department had strongly recommended that the United States should support the Latin Americans "on the grounds that we will be needing their support badly on other matters at this

⁹⁶ US Delegation to United Nations to Secretary of State, 28 September 1956. USNA, 702.022/9-2856.

⁹⁷ Office Memorandum from Samuel DePalma (IO:UNP), 9 August 1956. USNA, 702.022/8-956.

⁹⁸ Man Minute (Referring to Crosthwaite's letter), 20 August 1956. TNA, FO 37/119838.

General Assembly.” When the Indians got word of the United States’ decision, the possibility of losing a vote on inscription greatly increased, and they decided, as honorably as possible, to withdraw the item.

On 14 November 1956, at the organizational meeting of the Eleventh General Assembly, Krishna Menon made a speech withdrawing India’s proposal to debate Antarctica. The British delegation sent the official transcript to London with some satisfaction:

In explanation Mr. Krishna Menon said that the Indian Delegation would be withdrawing the item in view of the heavy agenda with which the Assembly was faced as a result of the inscription of the emergency items on the Middle East and Hungary. Moreover, certain exploration and investigation was now taking place in Antarctica. Nevertheless the Indian Delegation still attached great importance to the item but did not think that it need to be considered at this session of the Assembly. Their decision to withdraw the item did not mean that they were abandoning it.⁹⁹

The obvious cause of this withdrawal was the United States’ decision to vote against inscription and the threat of defeat for India that this brought with it.¹⁰⁰ But the developing Suez crisis also played a role. By November, the United Kingdom’s High Commission in India reported Menon’s “almost total preoccupation” with the Suez Crisis.¹⁰¹ Unlike at the beginning of the year when the Antarctic item had first

⁹⁹ UK Delegation to United Nations, Report on Debate, 15 November 1956. TNA, FO 371/119838.

¹⁰⁰ P.E. Ramsbotham (UK delegation to UN) to H.A.A. Hankey (American Dep), 19 November 1956. TNA, FO 371/119838.

¹⁰¹ UK High Commission in India to Foreign Office, 11 October 1956. TNA, FO 371/119838.

been proposed, Menon now had something substantive to talk about at the United Nations.¹⁰²

Without opposition from both the British Commonwealth and the Latin American blocs, it is unlikely that the Indians would have withdrawn their proposal to raise the Antarctica Question at the United Nations. The British, Australians, and New Zealanders could not have defeated inscription on their own, not least because they were wary of openly opposing the Indians. Opposition from the Latin American bloc proved to be the decisive factor against the Indian item: firstly because it destroyed the idea of “Third World Unity” that the Indians hoped to foster, and secondly because the demands of Pan-Americanism eventually forced the United States to oppose the proposition. But in terms of voting arithmetic, the South Americans could not have won on their own either. The tacit alliance between the British Commonwealth and Latin America, while distant, was acknowledged on both sides. The British strategy to oppose inscription explicitly involved “letting others take the lead,” and they recognized the power of Argentine and Chilean opposition. Despite the bitter sovereignty dispute in the Antarctic Peninsula, Britain, Argentina and Chile proved that they could work together when their collective interests depended upon it. Such a working relationship, with its agreement to disagree on certain questions, set an important precedent for the co-operation implicit to the Antarctic Treaty of 1959.

The fact that the “Antarctic Question” was not raised at the United Nations General Assembly in 1956 had other important implications for the future of

¹⁰² For a discussion of Menon’s role in the Suez Crisis see William Roger Louis, *Ends of British imperialism : the scramble for empire, Suez and decolonization : collected essays* (London, 2006). 675.

Antarctica. It is difficult to imagine that the members of the United Nations would have allowed twelve countries to sign the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 and form an “exclusive club,” if they had already had experience of debating Antarctica. More concretely, the fears and discord generated by the prospect of a United Nations debate led United States officials to re-think their indecisive Antarctic policy, and seek a resolution – on their own terms – as rapidly as possible. Over the next three years, this United States policy shift proved to be one of the major driving forces towards the Antarctic Treaty. In 1958, India again thought about raising the Antarctic Question at the United Nations, but by this stage negotiations towards a treaty were already underway, and the Indian proposal met with much less sympathy. India’s ideas were not completely ignored in the eventual settlement of the Antarctic question. Indian fears of nuclear testing, for example, found their way into the text of the Antarctic Treaty at the insistence of Argentina.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, it was opposition to the Indian proposal, more than the proposal itself, that had the most lasting impact on the history of Antarctica. The unlikely alliance that developed between the British Commonwealth and Latin America against discussion of Antarctica at the United Nations ought to be seen alongside the tri-partite naval agreement first signed in 1948, and Julio Escudero’s *modus vivendi* idea, as an important foundation of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959.

THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF WHALING

Throughout the late 1950s, but away from the immediate political concerns of the sovereignty dispute and the IGY, the members of the International Whaling

¹⁰³ Adolfo Scilingo, *El Tratado antártico; defensa de la soberanía y la proscripción nuclear* ([Buenos Aires], 1963).

Commission (IWC) were desperately attempting to reach an agreement to halt the collapse of Antarctic whaling industry.¹⁰⁴ Since the end of the Second World War, over-fishing had decimated whale stocks and by the mid 1950s the whaling industry was on the brink of collapse.¹⁰⁵ In 1946 the IWC had set the annual quota for whale catch at 16,000 Blue Whale Units (BWU). It quickly became apparent that this number was too high to be sustainable. Catches were only maintained by killing less productive whale species, while the more popular whales faced extinction. By the late 1950s, the majestic blue whale, the largest living creature on earth, had almost disappeared. Although figures for whale catch and revenue in the Falkland Islands Dependencies remained relatively steady, the figures masked an imminent crisis.¹⁰⁶ The free market quota system – a free-for-all until the total quota had been reached – encouraged investment in modern, efficient whaling fleets.¹⁰⁷ As a result, the total whaling capacity far exceeded the number of whales permitted to be caught. As a consequence of this investment, few whalers were willing to reduce the quota, even though they could clearly see the problem of over-fishing. Antarctic whaling, as practiced in the mid-1950s, was fundamentally unsustainable.

The participation of the Soviet Union in the Antarctic whaling industry made the resolution of the over-fishing problem more difficult and brought Cold War rivalries into the international politics of whaling.¹⁰⁸ The Soviet Union had been sending the *Slava* whaling fleet to Antarctic waters since the late 1940s. There was widespread suspicion among western countries that the Soviet ships were blatantly

¹⁰⁴ Elliot, *A whaling enterprise: Salvesen in the Antarctic*.

¹⁰⁵ Tønnessen and Johnsen, *The history of modern whaling*.

¹⁰⁶ *Colonial Office Lists* (H.M.S.O. 1939-1959)

¹⁰⁷ Elliot, *A whaling enterprise: Salvesen in the Antarctic*.

¹⁰⁸ Tønnessen and Johnsen, *The history of modern whaling*.

disregarding the IWC quota system, but there was no easy way to prove this nor to do anything about it. Additionally, there were fears that Soviet whaling activities went beyond the simple catching of whales and included geopolitical objectives.¹⁰⁹ These fears were well founded: scientists on board the whaling vessels initiated a substantial program of oceanographic research that would be continued during the IGY. Oceanography offered several potential strategic benefits, not least the production of maps and charts for submarines, and was among the most politically sensitive scientific activities of the early Cold War. This research was a long way in front of that of any other country, and was of particular concern to the United States.

Alongside the difficulties posed by Soviet whaling to the work of the IWC, the activities of other individual states and whaling companies threatened to further decrease whale populations.¹¹⁰ The most famous incident took place in 1955 off the coast of Peru. The whaling fleet of the Greek shipping magnate Aristotle Onassis came into conflict with the governments of Peru and Chile, which claimed that he was violating their national waters.¹¹¹ The governments of Japan and the Netherlands, relative newcomers to the Antarctic whaling industry were, somewhat surprisingly, unwilling to co-operate fully with the IWC quota system. The Japanese had been given special dispensation to participate in the whaling industry by General Douglas MacArthur, while Germany had been refused permission. Some of these “rogue whaling states” were employing cutting-edge whaling technology, which gave them less incentive for co-operation with the IWC quota system.

¹⁰⁹ The US Embassy in Moscow reported that the Soviet Whaling expeditions were also conducting scientific investigations US Embassy Moscow to Department of State, 28 January 1955. USNA, 702.022/1-2855.

¹¹⁰ Tønnessen and Johnsen, *The history of modern whaling*.

¹¹¹ American Embassy Santiago to Department of State, 21 January 1955. USNA, 702.022/1-2155.

Throughout the 1950s, ever-greater efficiency within the whaling industry compounded the problems of over-fishing. Modern technology enabled whalers to maintain their catch figures despite declining whale populations. Whaling companies attempted to harness radar technology developed during the Second World War to locate whales. They also used aircraft to search for targets for the whale catchers.¹¹² Factory ships became more adept at processing the whole whale, rather than abandoning everything but the valuable whale oil, while at the same time increasing the capacity for processing more whales: the vessels built in the aftermath of the Second World War were the most efficient ever seen. Even the weather forecasting service initiated by Sir Miles Clifford made whaling more productive and less dangerous by maximizing the days spent at sea catching whales. However, none of these developments was sustainable. All they offered were short-term solutions that enabled the whaling industry to remain profitable while hastening the demise of Antarctic whaling.

The inability to resolve the problem of over-fishing created a mood of resigned acceptance among whalers.¹¹³ Whalers sought ways to make as much money as possible before the industry sank. Norwegian whalers led calls for a less market-driven quota system based on historical levels of participation in the whaling industry. In making this case, the Norwegians and others drew on a “Tragedy of the Commons” scenario.¹¹⁴ In an open environment such as the Southern Ocean, freedom for all, they argued, would lead to tragedy for everybody. Norway’s rivals, however, tended to focus on the fact that a quota system based on past levels of

¹¹² John Grierson, *Air whaler* (London, 1949).

¹¹³ Elliot, *A whaling enterprise: Salvesen in the Antarctic*.

¹¹⁴ Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons."

participation in the industry would give the Norwegians by far the largest quota. The politics of self-interest tended to underlie even the most rational conservation proposals. Newcomers to the Antarctic whaling industry argued that they had as much right as anybody else to fish in the Southern Ocean. These apparently irreconcilable positions created an atmosphere of mutual suspicion in which it looked increasingly less likely that anything could be done to prevent the impending collapse of Antarctic whale populations.

International negotiations over the future of the Antarctic whaling industry took place outside the immediate scope of the dispute over the sovereignty of the Antarctic Peninsula and the area covered by Antarctic whaling was much larger than the region contested by Britain, Argentina, and Chile. Nevertheless, the international politics of whaling and the predicted collapse of the whale stocks did have an important, if indirect, influence on the course of the dispute. In the period following the Second World War, despite repeated attempts to get involved in the industry, neither Argentina nor Chile had a substantial presence in the industry, although the Argentine-owned Pesca company continued to function.¹¹⁵ As a consequence they both viewed the IWC with suspicion. Although both South American countries were initial signatories of the IWC, neither ratified it until after the end of the sovereignty dispute.

In contrast to its two South American rivals, Great Britain played a central role in both the whaling industry itself and in the negotiations over the future of whaling. The British Empire's original claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies had been based on the desire to tax and regulate the nascent Antarctic whaling

¹¹⁵ Hart, *Pesca: the history of Compañía Argentina de Pesca Sociedad Anónima of Buenos Aires: an account of the pioneer modern whaling and sealing company in the Antarctic.*

industry, and its justification for ownership was based partly on the promise of stewardship of Antarctica's marine resources. However, since the late 1920s, pelagic whaling based on large self-supported factory ships had diminished Britain's capability both to tax and to regulate. Although the shore stations on South Georgia continued to provide significant revenues, by the mid-1950s, Britain's presence in Antarctica was no longer economically self-sufficient. The escalation of FIDS activities in response to Perón's Antarctic Dream had been paid for by the British taxpayer, rather than by taxes on the whaling industry. This was anathema to the political economy of Britain's Empire.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Colonial Development Office had sponsored a scheme to increase Britain's share of Antarctic whaling profits. Officials reasoned that any project to bolster the British presence in the Falkland Islands Dependencies would be good for Britain's case in the sovereignty dispute, especially if it generated additional revenue. However, potential investors had been frightened off by the political instability caused by the sovereignty dispute. Uncertainty surrounded the question of whether Britain would maintain control of the region, and there was an unwillingness to get caught in the middle of disputing countries. There was also something backward looking in plans for another shore-based whaling company in an age where modern factory ships had come to dominate the industry.

The experiences of Salvesen, the major British company involved in the whaling industry, in many ways encapsulated Britain's experiences of Antarctic whaling during the 1940s and 1950s. Based at Leith harbor, near Edinburgh, Salvesen had been involved in the Antarctic whaling industry since the first decade of the twentieth century. During the enforced break of the Second World War, the

company lost almost all its whaling vessels. In 1946, the company began again with two purpose-built factory ships, although neither of these vessels was quite as modern or efficient as the most technologically advanced vessels that would be built in Japan and the Netherlands. During the 1950s the directors of Salvesen were well aware that they were participating in an industry that was chasing fewer and fewer whales with greater and greater capacity. The wranglings over quota systems at the IWC proved frustrating for men whose job it was to catch whales. As the decade progressed, Salvesen began to sell off its whaling fleet and further diversify its business activities, shifting its focus from whaling to logistics.¹¹⁶

An increasing awareness that the Antarctic whaling industry was unsustainable contributed to a gradual change in British attitudes towards sovereignty in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. This shift was generally noticeable only through a decline in the enthusiasm for Antarctica's economic resources. Fewer officials looked upon whaling as a solution to the world's food problems, and there was increasingly less attachment to the retention of exclusive British sovereignty in the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

¹¹⁶ Elliot, *A whaling enterprise: Salvesen in the Antarctic*.

Chapter 9: The International Geophysical Year, 1957-58

Between 1957 and 1958, the International Geophysical Year (IGY) dominated the politics of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute. This massive international research endeavor, which had been planned since 1950, led to an unprecedented level of scientific research across Antarctica and consummated the relationship between politics and science. Besides the three countries directly involved in the dispute, nine other nations took part in Antarctic research. The United States and the Soviet Union had by far the largest projects, and both superpowers established scientific bases across the continent. New Zealand, Australia, France, and Norway – the other claimant countries – all participated with substantial research programs. Citing historical precedents or geographical proximity, Belgium, Japan, and South Africa also conducted Antarctic research as part of the IGY. As a consequence of this international activity, the number of bases on the Antarctic continent increased from 20 in 1955 to 48 during the IGY, and the twelve countries spent an estimated \$280 million on Antarctic research.¹

Despite growing interest, the Antarctic Peninsula region remained very much the preserve of Great Britain, Argentina, and Chile. Only the United States sought to unsettle the contentious status quo by building a base in the disputed territory. For their part, scientists from Britain, Argentina, and Chile, generally constrained their research to the parts of Antarctica claimed by their governments, and none of these three countries built a research base outside the boundaries of their territorial claims.²

¹ Sullivan, *Assault on the unknown; the International Geophysical Year*. 305-306.

² Scientists from Britain, Argentina, and Chile did participate in scientific exchanges with other IGY nations. For example, Alberto Arrviz, an Argentine meteorologist, worked at the Weather Central at the US Little America base during the IGY.

However, the three countries with a direct interest in the sovereignty dispute took very different attitudes towards the IGY. Great Britain, which had been involved in the project from the beginning, embraced it whole heartedly. Argentina and Chile remained relative outsiders and viewed it with a great deal more suspicion.

Stemming from Cold War rivalries and from the vexed question of territorial sovereignty, the IGY developed something of a Jekyll and Hyde personality. On the one hand, it was characterized by international co-operation, the sharing of scientific data, and the exchange of scientific personnel.³ On the other hand, the IGY offered the various participants a worldwide stage upon which to compete with each other in demonstrating their scientific prowess. The performance of science became an acknowledged tactic in broader struggles over Antarctic sovereignty, not least because scientific results often had strategic implications. Political competition was a fundamental part of the IGY: countries interested in the question of Antarctic sovereignty felt that they could not be excluded from the scientific endeavor. At the same time as scientists co-operated and competed, they also learned more about Antarctica. This increasing knowledge of the continent, which often included the realization that Antarctica was not the Frozen *El Dorado* that many had believed, changed attitudes towards the continent. These changing attitudes would have important political implications. These three elements – co-operating, competing, and learning – took place concurrently, and it is often difficult to separate them. In

³ Richard Lewis, for example, has written, “The IGY evolved swiftly to become the most successful cooperative effort in the history of nations. It was also man’s greatest effort to unravel the mysteries of the environment.” Lewis, *A continent for science; the Antarctic adventure*. 63. Histories of Antarctica often see the IGY as a *deus ex machina* emerging independently to resolve the political problems of the continent in a wave of scientific idealism. See, for example, Martin, *A history of Antarctica*. Berkman, *Science into policy: global lessons from Antarctica*. Belanger, *Deep Freeze: the United States, the International Geophysical Year, and the origins of Antarctica's age of science*.

dynamic and unforeseen ways, the IGY had a major impact on the political history of Antarctica.

BRITISH PARTICIPATION

In the aftermath of the Suez crisis of late 1956, Harold Macmillan replaced Anthony Eden as Prime Minister. The crisis had led to a significant rupture in Anglo-American relations. Upon taking office, the new Prime Minister instituted a reevaluation of Britain's strategic priorities that became known as the "audit of empire."⁴ With the need to placate US anti-colonial sentiment in the backs of their minds, British officials assessed which colonies were worth holding onto and which were not. Very often the criteria were economic, but decisions were also made based on strategy, constitutional development, the desire of the local population for independence, and vague notions of "prestige." The results were published in May 1957 in an internal report entitled *Future Constitutional Development in the Colonies*.⁵ The audit of empire gave a facade of order and control to what was in fact a chaotic situation. The reality "on the ground" was that the British were losing control throughout much of its colonial empire. Nationalist sentiments were surging and Britain lacked the ability to suppress them. The genius of Harold Macmillan was to infuse the inevitable process of decolonization with the myth of an orderly and pre-ordained handover.

In a few terse paragraphs, *Future Constitutional Development in the Colonies* concluded that the Falkland Islands themselves could be given an independent

⁴ A.G. Hopkins, "Macmillan's Audit of Empire, 1957" in Clarke and Trebilcock, *Understanding decline : perceptions and realities of British economic performance*.

⁵ *Future Constitutional Development in the Colonies*, May 1957. TNA, CAB 134/1551.

government with no loss to British prestige. The population was almost entirely British, and the colony would remain loyal to Britain after independence. Since the Falkland Islanders were largely self sufficient, the British exchequer would neither gain nor lose through the establishment of an independent government. Interestingly, by 1957, the strategic value of the Falkland Islands had become almost entirely linked to Antarctica: “the strategic importance of the Falklands to the United Kingdom is primarily as a base from which to support Commonwealth interests in the Antarctic, and depends on a regime attached to the United Kingdom connection.”⁶ Argentine claims to the Falkland Islands presented the only danger of independence:

Provided withdrawal of UK jurisdiction did not also involve withdrawal of UK protection, there would be no vacuum to be filled by an outsider. If however, protection were also withdrawn, the Falkland Islands would be in danger of occupation by Argentina, and the abandonment of a racially British population to such a fate would be discreditable and severely damaging to prestige.⁷

Although the report mentioned that there was “no sign of demand for constitutional change,” it made very little reference to the political desires of the Falkland Islanders.

In contrast to the Falkland Islands themselves, the report noted that the Falkland Islands Dependencies had practically no permanent population. The strategic interests of the Dependencies depended, in part, upon the possibility of

⁶ Ibid. Since the British takeover of the Falkland Islands in 1833, the islands had lost much of their strategic value for a number of reasons including opening of the Panama Canal, long distance flight, and the development of inter-continental ballistic missiles.

⁷ Ibid.

discovering minerals of strategic importance. Otherwise, the strategic influence of the Dependencies was largely negative: “it is important to the Commonwealth to deny it as a base to a potentially hostile power.”⁸ While that “potentially hostile power” was most probably the Soviet Union, lingering bitterness about the neutrality of Argentina and Chile during the Second World War may also have played into these calculations. Because of the claims of Argentina and Chile, British sovereignty in the Dependencies depended on the activities of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey. These activities cost the British taxpayer £200,000 a year, in addition to the revenue from whaling taxes which was also spent on the Survey. Although the situation remained complicated, the economic costs of maintaining British sovereignty in the Dependencies were difficult to justify unless valuable minerals could be found:

Our withdrawal from Antarctica would mean a loss of UK prestige and influence, especially in scientific circles. It might also involve the loss of strategic minerals, but this will be easier to evaluate when the results have been assessed of the work done during the International Geophysical Year. Argentina and/or Chile, which have claims (partly competing) to the Dependencies, would probably step in if the UK withdrew.⁹

The authors of *Future Constitutional Development in the Colonies* envisioned the IGY as playing an integral role in Britain’s decision whether or not to maintain its claims to exclusive sovereignty over the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

Britain’s contribution to the IGY became closely connected with competing ideas about the future of empire. From the Government’s point of view, the

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

demands of Macmillan's "audit of empire" imposed a definite agenda onto Britain's participation in the IGY. Scientists were given the implicit task of assessing the economic worth of the Dependencies. The scientists themselves were generally happy with this situation. They were learning to play the funding games of "big science," which meant that they had to portray their work as politically and economically useful in order to be given the necessary resources.¹⁰ Most British scientists simply got on with the research they wanted to do, without regard for the underlying political motivations. If they needed money they would stress the usefulness of their work. A few idealists murmured words of discontent, but overall Britain's IGY effort represented a harmonious mix of government and scientific interests.

The most obvious contribution to Britain's assessment of the economic potential of the Falkland Islands Dependencies was Peter Mott's aerial survey. Although this was not officially part of the IGY – mapping did not fall into any of the categories listed by ICSU – the project directly overlapped with the IGY, and can be seen as an important part of Britain's contribution.¹¹

Sir Vivian Fuchs, an eminent Cambridge geologist and the head of the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, became the most adept at promoting the political merits of his IGY plans.¹² Fuchs wanted to travel by land across the whole

¹⁰ For an exploration of the emergence of "Big Science" in the years after the Second World War see Peter Galison and Bruce William Hevly, *Big science: the growth of large-scale research* (Stanford, Calif., 1992). Polar explorers had always faced the need to raise large amounts of money to fund their expeditions. Polar exploration did not come cheap, and the likes of Amundsen, Scott, Shackleton, Mawson, and, perhaps most of all Byrd, had become accustomed to "selling" the political and economic worth of their expeditions in order to fund their expeditions.

¹¹ Mott, *Wings over ice: an account of the Falkland Islands and Dependencies Aerial Survey Expedition 1955-57*.

¹² Vivian Fuchs, *A time to speak: an autobiography* (Oswestry, Shropshire, England, 1990).

of Antarctica, periodically measuring the depth of the ice. It was no coincidence that Fuchs' "Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition" would also attempt to complete the shattered dream of Ernest Shackleton's 1914-16 expedition, and would, as was widely publicized, complete the entire traverse on territory claimed by the British Commonwealth. In reference to Fuchs' expedition, US diplomats reported comments made by Sir Anthony Eden while he was still Prime Minister:

Sir Anthony Eden is reported to have said that the UK has no wish to extend its influence beyond those areas, which had been "recognized as ours." For that reason, he said, the route of the Trans-Antarctic Expedition, long though it was, crossed only Commonwealth territory; but the UK did intend to maintain the "right to our wide areas" and to explore them.¹³

In seeking to maintain the spirit of imperial vitality demonstrated by the conquest of Everest in 1953, Fuchs invited the New Zealander Sir Edmund Hillary to join the expedition. The plan was for Hillary to travel to and from the South Pole from the Ross Sea (in the New Zealand Sector), laying food and fuel for Fuchs' return journey. Meanwhile, Fuchs would travel from a newly build British base on the Weddell Sea (in the Falkland Islands Dependencies) and would keep going past the Pole all the way to the Ross Sea. Both parts of the expedition would utilize tractors, but there would still be sufficient man hauling and crevasse crossing to infuse the journey with the requisite sweat, toil, and danger.

In the planning stages of the IGY, the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition had polarized official thinking about the British contribution. Some officials, most notably Sir Miles Clifford, thought that such an expedition would take

¹³ American Embassy London to Department of State, 10 November 1955. USNA, 702.022/11-1055.

funding away from the more useful work of surveying the Falkland Islands Dependencies. But as soon as the expedition set off, it captured the public imagination, not only in Britain but also around the world. Even the Chilean press got caught up in telling the story of Fuchs and Hillary's epic traverse of the Antarctic continent.¹⁴ In an age of big science and Cold War tension, there was something reassuringly human scale about the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition, which explicitly recalled the romance of the "heroic age" of Antarctic exploration. As in the earlier period, there was no shortage of human drama for the world press to comment upon. Sir Edmund Hillary decided that he wanted to be the third expedition leader to reach the South Pole, and he sped across the ice from the Ross Sea much faster than Fuchs could manage from the other side of the continent.

Besides the aerial survey and the Trans-Antarctic expedition, Britain constructed six new bases for the IGY and increased the number of people wintering in Antarctica from 57 in 1955 to 127 during 1957-58.¹⁵ The flagship scientific project was the Royal Society's construction of Halley Station on the Weddell Sea.¹⁶ The involvement of a non-governmental organization was intended to give Halley the appearance of a purely scientific enterprise, and the members of the Royal Society went to some lengths to distance themselves from political questions of sovereignty. Nevertheless, Halley was a permanent base (unlike the base constructed by Vivian Fuchs for his expedition) located within the Falkland Islands Dependencies. The close geographical proximity to Argentina's Base Belgrano

¹⁴ Consuelo León Wöppke et al., *La Antártica y El Año Geofísico Internacional. Percepciones desde fuentes Chilenas, 1954-58* (Valparaiso, 2006).

¹⁵ Sullivan, *Assault on the unknown; the International Geophysical Year*. 306.

¹⁶ David Brunt and Royal Society (Great Britain), *The Royal Society International Geophysical Year Antarctic Expedition : Halley Bay, Coats Land, Falkland Islands Dependencies, 1955-1959*, 4 vols. (London, 1960).

intensified the political stakes. In order to counter Argentine arguments that there was no scientific need for a base so close to their own, British scientists explained that they would be conducting different kinds of scientific experiments – focusing in particular on upper atmospheric observations – thereby legitimizing the location of Halley Base.¹⁷ Here, once again, scientific arguments were used on both sides of what continued to be an essentially political dispute.

Alongside the British participation in IGY Antarctic research, several Commonwealth countries conducted their own investigations in the southern continent. The Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic expedition was, as it sounded, a joint venture among Commonwealth countries. Next to Britain, New Zealand contributed the most in terms of financial resources, participants, and the construction of Scott Base on the Ross Sea, but other Commonwealth countries, including Australia and South Africa, also supported the expedition.¹⁸ These two latter countries, especially Australia, made extensive contributions of their own to the Antarctic section of the IGY. Before the IGY, Australia already occupied one base (Mawson) in the sector that it claimed, which had for a time been the only permanent base on the Antarctic continent outside of the Peninsula region. During the IGY Australia constructed a second base, and doubled the number of personnel in the Antarctic. The government in Canberra was particularly worried about the presence of Soviet bases on the Antarctic continent, which were established within the Australian claim, and could potentially be used for missile or submarine strikes on Australia itself. South Africa, for its part, concentrated research efforts on

¹⁷ It was at Halley Base during the 1980s that British scientists would conclusively demonstrate that the hole in the ozone layer was increasing.

¹⁸ Malcolm Templeton, *A wise adventure : New Zealand in Antarctica, 1920-1960* (Wellington. [N.Z.], 2000).

meteorological work on the Prince Edward Islands, a small group of islands mid-way between South Africa and Antarctica, and during the IGY South Africans made significant contributions to the development of Antarctic meteorology.¹⁹ By the mid-1950s, the various Commonwealth countries with interests in Antarctica were all pursuing their own national agendas, but there was a significant overlap of interests and the “Commonwealth bloc” remained an important grouping in Antarctic politics.

SOUTH AMERICAN PARTICIPATION

By the mid-1950s, South American interest in Antarctica had, to some extent, become detached from the material reality of the continent. In Argentina and Chile, the Antarctic Peninsula had become, above all, a patriotic cause. Whether or not Antarctica had any economic or strategic use mattered much less than the fact that the region had come to be seen as an integral part of both South American countries. A Report for the United States National Security Council on the IGY noted that: “Argentina and Chile take a pronounced nationalistic and emotional attitude toward their respective and, to a considerable extent, conflicting claims, over the Drake Straits and the Palmer Peninsula.”²⁰ As a consequence of this emotional attachment, and in contrast to the views of Great Britain and the United States, the two South American countries saw the IGY as more of a threat than an opportunity. This had been demonstrated by their attitudes towards the Paris planning meeting in 1955. The IGY, with its foundations in free and open scientific access to the continent,

¹⁹ For example, South Africans served at the IGY Weather Central, the data-center for meteorological research located at the US Little America base.

²⁰ National Security Council Report, NSC 5715/1, 29 June 1957. NSA, Presidential Directives PD00521.

clearly went against the normal workings of exclusive sovereignty. The IGY also changed the rules of engagement for the Antarctic sovereignty dispute: scientific research came to matter much more in demonstrations of sovereignty than simple occupation of the region. This new emphasis on science was more problematic for Chile than for Argentina, which already had an established record of scientific achievement in the region.

In Argentina, the military government of the *Revolución Libertador* had a distinctly nationalist and geo-political outlook and was suspicious of the political intentions of the IGY. In particular, the Argentines worried about the prospects of the Soviet Union establishing a base in the Antarctic Peninsula region.²¹ However, the military government also realized that they were in a good position to take advantage of the increasing connection between science and politics, and they resolved to put on a good show during the IGY. This, they hoped, would boost Argentina's scientific prestige in the region and, through this, strengthen their political claims.²²

Perón's acquisition of an icebreaker, and the recent establishment of a base on the shore of the Weddell Sea, in fact put Argentina in an excellent position to take a leading role in IGY science. Although the overthrow of Perón had temporarily hampered the scientific work being conducted by Hernán Pujato in Base Belgrano, the infrastructure was already in place to accelerate the research programs during the IGY. At the various Antarctic planning meetings Argentine delegates repeatedly argued that the presence of Base Belgrano on the southeastern corner of the Weddell

²¹ Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics in Antarctica: views from the Southern Oceanic Rim*, Polar research series (Chichester; New York, 1997).

²² Rodolfo Panzarini, "Intereses Científicos Argentinos en el Antártico," *Instituto Antártico Argentino, Contribuciones Científicas* (1959).

Sea meant that the construction of other bases in the same region was unnecessary and would lead to duplication of observations and research. From a scientific perspective, the Argentines had a good case: there were plenty of places in Antarctica without any bases at all. But the IGY was about more than science. Both Britain and the United States had plans to construct bases in the same area – Britain actually wanted to build two bases – and these plans had more to do with politics than science. Argentine diplomacy was unsuccessful in preventing the establishment of Britain’s Halley and Shackleton bases, and the United States’ Ellsworth base. Nevertheless, as science and politics increasingly blurred, Argentina was still in a very good position to demonstrate its scientific credentials during the IGY.

As one immediate result of their growing awareness of the relationship between science and politics, the Argentine Antarctic Institute resolved to publish more of its scientific findings. Prior to 1955, there had been no systematic publication strategy for Argentine scientists returning from Antarctica, although books and articles did appear. Between 1955 and 1959 the Argentine Antarctic Institute published 47 scientific “contributions.”²³ Apart from the large focus on campaigns and expeditions (over one third) there was no significant political trend in the type of scientific research being published. Biology and geology were high on the list mainly because the Peninsula region lends itself to such studies. The relative scarcity of publications on meteorology, oceanography and cartography reflects the fact that the National Meteorological Service, the Navy and the Instituto Geográfico

²³ The number of articles dealing with various themes: campaigns/expeditions (16); biology (10); geology (5); institutional (5); geophysics (3); meteorology (2); oceanography (1); cartography (1); human ecology: (1); other (3). Instituto Antártico Argentino, *Contribuciones Científicas, Autores-Títulos-Resúmenes Nos. 1-305, 1959-1983* (Buenos Aires, 1983).

Militar each continued with their own research independently of the Antarctic Institute.

In preparation for the IGY, a scientific department was formally integrated into the Instituto Antártico in 1956.²⁴ The permanent scientific staff was made up of four geologists, two biologists, two geophysicists, one physiologist, one chemist, one meteorologist, and one glaciologist. The head of the scientific department was Otto Schneider, a geophysicist. The inclusion in the scientific department of several scientists who had earlier worked with Pujato suggests a certain political pragmatism among both the scientists themselves and the Institute.

During the IGY, all eight of Argentina's permanent stations participated in some way with the IGY research, as did several research ships and temporary scientific bases.²⁵ Research was done in ten main areas: meteorology, geomagnetism, the aurora, the ionosphere, glaciology, seismology, oceanography, tides, gravity and biology. The aurora research is an interesting example since it took place at all eight permanent stations and was coordinated by the Instituto Antártico. Each station conducted a visual observation of the night sky for three hours every day and gave a detailed description of the aurora where it was present. On special alerts and the so-called "World Days" additional observations were taken. The official report to SCAR noted that:

All stations were equipped with cellulose acetate color filters and with a special auroral clinometer. Some stations had, in addition, red and green

²⁴ Santiago Mauro Comerci, "La Ciencia Argentina en el Antártico: El Insituto Antártico Argentino," *Instituto Antártico Argentino, Contribuciones Científicos* (1979).

²⁵ Instituto Antártico Argentino, *Report to SCAR on Antarctic Scientific Activities During the International Geophysical Year, 1957-1958* (Buenos Aires, 1960).

interference filters. Aerological sounding theodolites were used by some observers for detailed observation of azimuths and elevation angles.²⁶

Additionally, Base Belgrano, which had been established by Hernán Pujato, was equipped with an Alaskan type “all sky camera.” This camera took 24 hour continuous recordings during the dark season, and continuous nocturnal readings for the period between March and September 1958. By this stage there appears to have been no direct political motivation behind the type of research conducted, although, importantly, all Argentina’s Antarctic research during the IGY took place within the sector that Argentina claimed.

Tragedy came to Argentina’s IGY efforts in October 1958, when the Argentine vessel *Guarain* sank in Antarctic waters with the loss of 36 lives.²⁷ This was the biggest single loss of life during the IGY (and indeed, in Antarctic exploration to this point). Prestige was now so intricately connected with the question of territorial rights that the Argentine government did what it could to downplay this incident, fearing that it could reflect negatively on Argentina’s sovereignty claims.²⁸ Given the extreme conditions of the Antarctic continent, the lack of experience, and the number of expeditions, it is surprising that there were not more tragedies of this sort.

In Chile, after a long period of hesitation the government named General Ramón Cañas head of the Chilean Planning Commission of the IGY. As well as being one of the country’s leading authorities on Antarctica, Cañas was also one of

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Sullivan, *Assault on the unknown; the International Geophysical Year*. 298.

²⁸ Pierrou, *La Armada Argentina en la Antártida*.

Chile's leading geo-political theorists.²⁹ He had lobbied hard for Chilean involvement in the IGY and in his capacity as head of the National Committee of Geography, Geodesy, and Geophysics, the General had already made outline plans for a scientific research program for the 1957-58 summer. Although Ramón Cañas was, in many ways, an obvious choice to head the Chilean Planning Committee of the IGY, his geo-political attitude towards scientific research did not fit neatly into the strictly empirical, materialist, and politically neutral conception of science propounded by ICSU. Chile's embrace of the "science" of geopolitics can be seen in part as a response to the country's relative scientific weakness.³⁰ Chile was the poorest country to take part in the Antarctic section of the IGY, and could not compete with the scientific programs of its territorial rivals in the Antarctic Peninsula. By presenting a different way of looking at the world, geopolitics offered a subtle challenge to the scientific authority that was being imposed upon Chile.

The actual contribution of Chile to the IGY reads very similarly to that of Argentina, although on a reduced scale: auroral observations with an "all sky camera," meteorology reports sent to weather central, glaciology, oceanography, gravitational studies, seismology and participation in the various "World Days."³¹ The Chileans built a scientific base especially for the IGY, which they named Base Risopatrón after the Chilean Geographer who proposed the idea of an "American Antarctica."³² Unfortunately, this base burned down in March 1958, severely

²⁹ For a biography of General Cañas, see Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional, *Donación General Cañas Montalva: Catálogo del Fondo Bibliográfico*.

³⁰ Howkins, "Chilean Antarctic Science, 1946-1959." Paper presented to the SCAR History of Antarctic Science Conference in Santiago, September 2006.

³¹ Full details of the Chilean contribution can be found in Volume 41 of the Navy's *Hydrographical Bulletin* covering the years 1957-1963.

³² Luis Risopatrón, a famous geographer, was one of the first Chileans to write about Antarctica. Risopatrón, *La Antártida americana*.

hampering Chilean scientific efforts. Just as Escudero and others had feared, the Chilean contribution to the IGY was, in relative terms, much less than most of the other countries with political interests in the region. In the new era of Big Science in Antarctica, the Chileans were being forced to compete on a playing field that was far from level.

INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION

On a global scale, the IGY brought about an open display of scientific rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. On 4 October 1957, officially as part of its IGY research, the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik, the first ever earth-orbiting satellite.³³ A month later Sputnik II took a dog into space. Early in 1958, after several failed attempts, the United States responded with the launch of its own Explorer and Vanguard satellites. The newly initiated “space race” cast a long shadow over the IGY. Science offered the superpowers an arena to compete without going to war, but at the same time, many of the scientific discoveries and technological innovations had important military and political implications. Antarctic research was no different. Both the United States and the Soviet Union made scientific decisions regarding Antarctic IGY research at the highest political level, and both put significant economic resources into this research.³⁴ The two super-powers had a very similar approach to the Antarctic sovereignty: both refused to recognize any existing claims and reserved their own rights over the entire

³³ Needell, *Science, Cold War and the American state: Lloyd V. Berkner and the balance of professional ideals*. See Chapter 12: “IGY Satellites and the Launch of Sputnik.”

³⁴ In Washington, leading scientists frequently briefed the Operations Coordinating Board and the National Security Council.

continent. But throughout the IGY, there was constant speculation that one or both of the superpowers would make formal sovereignty claims.

IGY related US activity in Antarctica had begun in the 1954-55 season with a reconnaissance expedition by the icebreaker *Atka*. Hoping to assuage world fears about the military intentions of this voyage, Eisenhower announced, “the USS *Atka* was operating in the Antarctic on a preliminary logistical operation in preparation for the scientific expedition that would be undertaken in connection with the IGY of 1957-1958.”³⁵ In the following Antarctic summer the US Operation Deepfreeze established bases at Little America and McMurdo. Late in 1956, Admiral George Dufek became the first man to stand on the South Pole since Scott, and the United States proceeded to construct the Amundsen-Scott base at the South Pole. It was perhaps symbolic of changing times and changing power structures that when Sir Edmund Hillary became only the third man to lead a party overland to the South Pole as part of Fuchs’ Trans-Antarctic expedition, he was greeted there by the inhabitants of an American base, who had been flown in by airplane. The triumph of technology over muscle-power was there for all to see, even if the British muttered to themselves vague accusations of US “cheating” by not doing things the hard way.³⁶

During the 1956-57 season, with the support of the icebreaker USS *Staten Island*, Finn Ronne attempted to establish a base on the southwestern shore of the Weddell Sea. But after being unable to find a suitable location, his group constructed Ellsworth Base on the eastern shore, only thirty-five miles from

³⁵ Editorial Note, 2 March 1955. *FRUS*, 1955-57, Volume 11, United Nations and General Matters, no. 298.

³⁶ Hillary and Fuchs’ book about the expedition clearly reveals in the physical difficulty of the journey, even though both parties used tractors. Vivian Fuchs and Edmund Hillary, *The crossing of Antarctica; the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition, 1955-1958* (London., 1958).

Argentina's Base Belgrano and also close to Britain's Halley Base. This would be the only base in the disputed region that was not British, Argentine or Chilean.³⁷ As in 1947, Finn Ronne was chosen to lead the expedition into disputed territory, although this time his expedition was officially sponsored by the United States Government.³⁸ Besides Little America, McMurdo, Amundsen-Scott, and Ellsworth, the United States built four other bases in Antarctica, from all of which they conducted a variety of scientific experiments. Of particular importance were a series of overland expeditions that sought to measure the depth of the ice.³⁹ Also central to United States IGY activity was the establishment of a Weather Central at Little America, which gathered together meteorological data from all the IGY research being conducted in Antarctica. Walter Sullivan, a reporter from the *New York Times*, accompanied and wrote about many of these expeditions and experiments.⁴⁰ These reports, together with extensive coverage in journals such as *National Geographic*, helped to popularize United States' activities in Antarctica.

As United States' scientists went about their activities in Antarctica, the CIA worried about Soviet activities in the region and prepared a series of reports.⁴¹ In one of these reports, completed in January 1958, the CIA summarized Soviet participation in the IGY. The report noted that the Soviet Union had a tradition of

³⁷ In fact, Ellsworth base was located to the east of the region claimed by Chile, but inside the region disputed by Argentina and Britain.

³⁸ His previous expedition had been private, but had the official sanction of the government. See Chapter 4, "The Scramble for Antarctica."

³⁹ For an account of this ice-depth work, see Behrendt, *Innocents on the ice : a memoir of Antarctic exploration, 1957*.

⁴⁰ As well as his reporting for the *New York Times* Sullivan wrote books about the IGY and Antarctica. Sullivan, *Assault on the unknown; the International Geophysical Year*. Walter Sullivan, *Quest for a continent* (New York, 1957).

⁴¹ The CIA prepared a series of secret reports about Soviet activities in Antarctica, which included "Geographic Intelligence Report: Soviet Interests, Intentions, and Plans for Antarctica," 27 January 1958. USNA, CIA database, CIA-RDP79-01009A001800030001-9.

earth science research: since the communist revolution, Russian scientists had been “charged to aid the fatherland in the struggle against nature.” The Soviets also had considerable experience of research in the Arctic regions. This background made expansion into the Antarctic a natural progression, both in terms of scientific questions and in terms of logistical expertise. The CIA report noted that, prior to the IGY and with the exception of weather data – which Soviet scientists exchanged with the World Meteorological Organization – the Soviet Union had not shared any of its earth science results. In making this observation the author of the CIA report stressed the strategic importance of earth science data in such fields as seismology and oceanography. In this way the IGY had therefore served one of Lloyd Berkner’s principal political objectives in getting the Soviet Union to reveal at least some of its scientific capabilities. But it also demonstrated that in many fields the Soviets were ahead of the United States. As the IGY progressed, the CIA feared that the United States was being outdone in Antarctic research by the Soviets.⁴² Despite this scientific preeminence, the CIA concluded that there was no evidence that the Soviet Union was about to make a claim to Antarctica, although they were certain that their rivals would stay in Antarctica after the end of the IGY.

Modern Soviet scientific interest in the Antarctic had begun in 1948, when the Soviet whaling fleet began to be accompanied by an oceanographic research vessel. Late in 1955, following its declaration of intent to participate in IGY Antarctic research, the Soviet Union launched its “First Official Expedition” to Antarctica using the ice-breakers *Ob* and *Lena*. This expedition established the Mirny base on the coast of the territory claimed by Australia. In the following 1956-

⁴² See, for example, National Security Council Report, NSC 5804/1, 8 March 1958. NSA, Presidential Directives PD00545.

57 season, the Soviet Union attempted to establish two inland bases, including one at the pole of relative inaccessibility (Sovetskaya). Both of these attempts failed due to hostile conditions and technical problems. However, during the following summer (1957-58), the Soviets overcame these difficulties and constructed the Vostok and Sovetskaya bases deep in the interior of the continent. From these two bases valuable research work was conducted, especially on the meteorology of the interior of the continent. Throughout the IGY, the Soviet Union carried out oceanographic investigations and survey work around the coasts of the entire continent. In this way they sought to demonstrate their refusal to recognize sovereignty claims to Antarctica.

Alongside the four Commonwealth countries, Argentina and Chile, and the two superpowers, four other nations participated in IGY research in Antarctica: France, Norway, Belgium, and Japan. France and Norway were both claimant countries and they established bases inside their respective claims. With the consent of Norway, Belgium and Japan established bases within the Norwegian claim. This region was relatively accessible, but had little coverage by scientific bases. Both these countries had traditions of Antarctic exploration, and their participation did little to upset the question of sovereignty in the region. Nevertheless, the participation of countries without a direct stake in Antarctic sovereignty or direct political rivalries helped to give Antarctic IGY research a greater sense of internationalism and genuine scientific endeavor. This scientific idealism would be harnessed in the following years, above all by Great Britain and the United States, to bring about settlement of Antarctica's political difficulties.

Chapter 10: The Antarctic Treaty, 1958-59

In the wake of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957-58, officials from the twelve nations participating in scientific research in Antarctica met in Washington D.C. to discuss the political future of the Southern Continent. After over a year of preliminary negotiations, the actual Antarctic Conference lasted from October to December 1959. The result of this conference was the signature of the Antarctic Treaty on 1 December 1959 (See Appendix). In relation to the sovereignty dispute, the most important part of the treaty was Article IV, which suspended – or, in the official pun of the negotiations, “froze” – all sovereignty claims to Antarctica.¹ A sense prevails in Antarctic historiography that the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957-1958 led, almost inexorably, to the Antarctic Treaty of 1959.² The international goodwill generated through scientific co-operation, the traditional argument goes, laid the foundations for the agreement that created a “continent dedicated to peace and science.” While there is some truth in this interpretation, it tends to over-idealize the role of science as a force “above politics,” and it underestimates the fragility of the Antarctic Treaty negotiations. It also tends to overlook the political impact of the actual scientific results of the IGY.

In combination with other important factors – including the ongoing Cold War and the post-Suez acceleration of British decolonization – the scientific results of the IGY helped to convince British officials that the maintenance of exclusive

¹ The duration of the Antarctic Treaty was initially set at 30 years, but was extended a further 50 years by the Madrid Environmental Protocol of 1991. The Antarctic Treaty is therefore set to be reviewed in 2041.

² See, for example, Beck, *The international politics of Antarctica*, Lewis, *A continent for science; the Antarctic adventure*, Martin, *A history of Antarctica*, Philip W. Quigg, *A pole apart: the emerging issue of Antarctica* (1983).

political sovereignty in the Falkland Islands Dependencies was not worth the diplomatic and economic costs involved. The IGY seemed to confirm what many had already suspected: Antarctica was not the frozen *El Dorado* of popular imagination. Combined with the decline of the Antarctic whaling industry (discussed in chapter seven), the dawning realization that there was little prospect of Antarctic mineral wealth turned the Falkland Islands Dependencies into an economic liability. Fear of Soviet intentions in Antarctica added an urgency to the British strategic re-evaluation. In common with its policy throughout the empire, Great Britain came to desire an “informalization” of its interests in Antarctica, retaining political influence without the need for exclusive control.³ In close alliance with the United States and its Commonwealth partners, the British officials used the scientific goodwill generated by the IGY, together with widespread fears of Soviet intentions in Antarctica, to push for limited internationalization of the continent. In a series of secret meetings held in Washington in late 1957 and early 1958, representatives from Great Britain, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand thrashed out their plans for an internationalization of the continent, which would avoid, at all costs, the genuinely anti-colonial prospect that Antarctica would be taken over by some form of United Nations regime.

In both Argentina and Chile, government-sponsored publicity campaigns to raise awareness of national rights in Antarctica had proved successful. For example, all maps of Argentina and Chile by law had to include the respective Antarctic sectors.⁴ Argentines and Chileans had come to view the Antarctic Peninsula as an “integral part” of their national territories. As a consequence, the two South

³ Louis and Robinson, "The Imperialism of Decolonization."

⁴ The legal requirement for maps of Argentina and Chile to show Antarctica continues today.

American countries were less affected by the scientific results of the IGY. Argentine and Chilean claims to sovereignty were rooted in their belief in the inherent rightness of their cause: *Antártida Argentina* was Argentine and *Antártica Chilena* was Chilean simply because they were. As early as 1947, the Foreign Minister of Chile, Raúl Juliet had stated:

But even if there was nothing of value, even if in the Chilean Sector there was not but the cold and desolate prolongation of the fatherland, there would exist on our part the obligation to preserve and defend it, precisely for that reason: that it is the southern part of Chile, an integral part of her soil.⁵

The economic potential of Antarctica, while not irrelevant, did not alter the perceived fact of South American sovereignty. The Argentine and Chilean governments were therefore less willing to participate in the Antarctica negotiations, since they realized that any internationalization of the southern continent could be interpreted as a cession of their national territories. However, as with the IGY, both South American countries found themselves swept along by the tide of events. Fearing both Soviet intentions and alternative, more truly international solutions in the United Nations, the Argentines and Chileans deemed it better to protect their interests from within an international conference than to remain outside.

Even as the twelve nations that had participated in IGY Antarctic research gathered in Washington D.C. to discuss the political future of Antarctica, the outcome remained uncertain. There was nothing inevitable about the signature of the Antarctic Treaty. At the preliminary negotiations, the Russians initially proved

⁵ Address of the Minister of Foreign Relations, Raúl Juliet Gomez Before the Chilean Senate, 21 January 1947. RR.EE., “Antártico 1939-1952” (Chilean Translation).

intransigent in their refusal to discuss any matters of substance. The South American representatives made frequent assertions of their sovereignty rights and sought to impede the creation of an international regime. At the Antarctic conference itself, the Argentines in particular were determined to push to negotiations to their limits, possibly hoping to cause a breakdown in the discussions.⁶ The Argentine delegation introduced two controversial measures. The first was a limit to the proposed “freedom of scientific investigation” in Antarctica, which was one of the pillars of the conference. The second was a proposal expressly to ban nuclear explosions in Antarctica. This latter suggestion brought Cold War rivalries into the heart of the Antarctic conference, and for a while it looked to jeopardize the outcome. Ultimately, however, there proved to be sufficient desire for a limited form of internationalization among the participating countries – including, quite remarkably, the two super-powers – to bring about the signature of the Antarctic Treaty.⁷ By achieving the retention of British political influence without the need for formal control, this outcome represented a success for British diplomacy. For Argentina and Chile, the outcome was more of a mixed result: their national claims had been suspended, but they found themselves members of an “exclusive club.” Although the three nations disputing the ownership of the Antarctic Peninsula region continued to champion the righteousness of their cause, the signature of the Antarctic Treaty effectively brought an end to the active phase of the sovereignty dispute.

⁶ Scilingo, *El Tratado antártico; defensa de la soberanía y la proscripción nuclear*.

⁷ The agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union was decisive. For a more detailed discussion of the super-power role in the creation of the Antarctic Treaty see Klotz, *America on the ice: Antarctic policy issues.*, and Moore, "Diplomacy, Public Opinion and the 'Fractalization' of U.S. Antarctic Policy, 1946-1959".

RESULTS OF THE IGY

In a sense, the scientific results of the IGY began to emerge before the IGY had even started. The 1956-57 summer season had witnessed tremendous preparatory activity for the IGY, including the construction of the US Amundsen-Scott station at the South Pole. Never before had there been so many scientists in Antarctica. Many of them settled in for the winter; others returned home to oversee IGY activities from a distance. Throughout the IGY and into 1959, the results of the IGY trickled into the various data centers around the world.⁸ It would take years for all the data to be fully processed, but initial analyses and impressions had important implications for the sovereignty dispute.⁹ Hundreds of scientists and a handful of policymakers had experienced the Antarctic environment at first hand, and now had more of a practical understanding of the continent.¹⁰ Fantasies of Antarctica as a frozen *El Dorado*, bursting with buried treasure, could not survive such close scrutiny. The most important political results of the IGY were the negative ones: what was not found.¹¹ Scientists did not discover any economically viable mineral resources. These results were often associated with the non-IGY research taking place alongside the official international program, in fields deemed too politically

⁸ The results of the IGY were a truly international endeavor. Perhaps surprisingly, given all the underlying political tensions, the reality of shared scientific data matched the rhetoric. Scientific results were pooled into international “data centers” from where scientists from all the participating countries could analyze them. Scientists held international conferences to discuss their findings, and the results were published in international scientific journals. From a purely scientific perspective the IGY had been a great success.

⁹ For example, conference of meteorologists met in Melbourne. *Symposium of Antarctic Meteorology* (Melbourne 1959).

¹⁰ Even Britain’s Prince Philip traveled to Antarctica during the IGY.

¹¹ Problem with negative data and “what if” history. Many countries participated in the Antarctic section of the IGY with the explicit purpose of assessing the economic potential of Antarctica. It is impossible to know what would have happened *if* exploitable mineral resources had been found, but it is easy to speculate that the history would have been very different.

sensitive for international co-operation, such as geology and mapping. Official IGY research did, however, contribute to the awareness that Antarctica had no immediate economic value: glaciology, for example, revealed that the ice was too thick and meteorology showed that the weather was too hostile for viable economic extraction of minerals.¹² The IGY did not really change the Antarctic environment, but it did fundamentally change human perceptions of that environment.

There was no single defining moment when scientists declared that there were no easily exploitable mineral deposits to be found in Antarctica. Rather, there was a gradual realization that Antarctica would not prove to be the frozen *El Dorado* of popular imagination (although in some ways dreams persisted¹³). This unspectacular realization would have significant political consequences. British officials in particular viewed the IGY as a scientific “audit of empire.” As the results filtered in they seemed to confirm what many already had already suspected: that Antarctica contained little of immediate economic worth. The growing realization that Antarctica held little intrinsic economic value, combined with the impending collapse of the Antarctic whaling industry, contributed to Britain’s growing desire to resolve the question of sovereignty in Antarctica.¹⁴ The advantages of maintaining exclusive sovereignty in the Falkland Islands Dependencies increasingly seemed to

¹² The fact that the unclaimed sector was now thought to be mostly under-water reduced US interest in making claims. National Security Council Report, NSC 5804/1, 8 March 1958. NSA, Presidential Directives PD00545.

¹³ The Antarctic Treaty would be designed to permit economic exploitation as and when sufficiently valuable minerals were found. These debates would become particularly important during the 1980s. Brian Roberts noted: “The US aide memoire was cautiously worded, but included reference to most of the main features which had been agreed in the informal quadripartite discussions. No reference was made, however, to the need for arrangements to control activities aimed at the exploitation of mineral resources. (This omission was in deference to the views of the Australians, who wished if possible to retain exclusive sovereign rights in this respect).” Brian Roberts, “Historical Note to the Antarctic Treaty Conference,” 1959. SPRI, MS1308/9.

¹⁴ Brian Roberts, “Historical Note to the Antarctic Treaty Conference,” 1959. SPRI, MS1308/9.

justify neither the diplomatic headaches it caused, nor the expense it incurred. The Cold War, in particular, and the damage caused by the Antarctic dispute to the Western Alliance, made the resolution of sovereignty in Antarctica imperative.¹⁵ Following the Suez Crisis of 1956, the late 1950s were a period of rapid change throughout the colonial empire. Despite its peripheral location, Antarctica was caught up in the icy winds of change.

The British did not simply give up on their colonial empire. Rather, Britain's overarching policy towards the "transfer of power" – in theory if not always in practice – was to maintain economic and political influence without the need for continued formal control.¹⁶ In some ways this imperialism of decolonization held out the prospect of a return to a state of "informal imperialism," which had served the country so well during the nineteenth century with its mantra "informal control where possible, formal control where not."¹⁷ Just as the British hoped to retain influence by keeping the newly independent countries of Africa within the Commonwealth and maintaining economic and cultural connections, they hoped to maintain British influence in Antarctica without the need for formal control. In Antarctica, science rather than economics would provide the tool with which the British would seek to maintain their influence. On the one hand, the international goodwill generated by the IGY offered a focal point for negotiation. Such an attitude

¹⁵ The most pressing issue regarding Antarctica that faced British policy makers was the increasing presence of the Soviet Union in the continent. The fear of communism in Antarctica was a fear shared by the United States, Britain's Commonwealth partners (particularly those in the Southern Hemisphere), and with Argentina and Chile, the Governments of which, at this point, were vehemently anti-communist. Intelligence revealed that the Soviets were taking a lead in Antarctic science, and there were fears that they were building submarine bases in the continent. It was acknowledged that the Russians intended to stay after the end of the IGY.

¹⁶ Louis and Robinson, "The Imperialism of Decolonization."

¹⁷ Robinson and Gallagher, "The Imperialism of Free Trade."

built on the supposed internationalism of science, and on co-operation within the international scientific community.¹⁸ Science could be presented as being “above politics,” although most people at the time realized that it was not. On the other hand, science as a means of understanding the natural world was an area in which the British had a traditional strength. By the late 1950s, in the new age of “Big Science,” Britain had certainly fallen behind both the United States and the Soviet Union (as evidenced by lack of British participation in the “space race”). But British scientists remained at the forefront of global science, as Sydney Chapman’s chairmanship of the IGY clearly demonstrated. In any hierarchy based on scientific endeavor, the British believed that they would rise to the top. More cynically, requirements for scientific research offered a means of keeping anti-colonial “trouble makers” out of Antarctic decision making.

ICY WINDS OF CHANGE

The process that would culminate in the signature of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 began as a series of secret negotiations between Britain, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand.¹⁹ Beginning in August 1957, with the IGY barely started, officials from these four countries met periodically in Washington D.C. to discuss the political future of the Antarctic continent.²⁰ As a working paper for these

¹⁸ Science allowed countries to discuss essentially political issues without talking about explicit questions of sovereignty, administration, or jurisdiction. From the very beginning of the dispute, at the same time as the three sides had used scientific to demonstrate their rights, science had also been seen as a means of diffusing tension.

¹⁹ Berguño, “Intellectual Origins of the Antarctic Treaty.” Paper presented to 2nd SCAR history of Antarctic science workshop, Santiago, September 2006.

²⁰ Memorandum of Discussion at a Department of State-Joint Chiefs of Staff Meeting, Washington, 10 January 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2. United Nations and General International Matters Source, no.264. (Source: Department of State, State-JCS Meeting: Lot 61 D417. Top Secret.)

meetings, Britain produced an extensive plan for the internationalization of Antarctica.²¹ This working paper was approved by the Cabinet Ministers involved in Antarctica (Foreign Office, Colonial Office, Admiralty, and Treasury), as a basis for the quadripartite negotiations, but it did not yet have the stamp of official policy.²² The suggestions put forward in the working paper are quite astounding in terms of their scope and the degree of internationalization proposed. The British envisioned the creation of an international council with a two-tiered structure: effectively an international government with its own bureaucracy.

The quadripartite negotiations had two inter-connected goals. Firstly, they addressed the question of how to respond to the growing Soviet presence in Antarctica. Secondly, they discussed what sort of territorial arrangements could best resolve the political uncertainty of Antarctica – especially the three-way dispute in the Antarctic Peninsula – and limit communist influence in the continent. Central to the negotiations was the discussion of how to keep “trouble makers” out of Antarctica, meaning how to keep the question off the agenda of the United Nations.²³ In the delicate balancing act of making the Antarctic Treaty acceptable to international opinion without opening the continent to genuine international control, science offered a useful tool. At one meeting, Lord Hood, the British Ambassador in Washington, suggested that “the Soviet puppets and other undesirables could be excluded by applying the criterion proposed in the US paper, namely that countries participating in the preparation of the statute should have ‘a direct and substantial

²¹ H.G.M. Bass (CRO) to High Commissions in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and India, 28 Jan 1958. TNA, FO 371/131905.

²² H.A. Hankey Minute, 10 January 1958. TNA, FO 371/131905.

²³ British Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, 14 January 1958. TNA, FO 371/131905.

interest' in Antarctica.”²⁴ In order to show such “direct and substantial” interest, a country would have to be performing scientific research in the continent. The British delegation to the United Nations continued to worry about the prospect of the “Antarctic Question” being raised at the UN: “it seems to us that it would be well worth while offering the principal trouble-makers any possible concessions outside the UN. Here, in the Assembly of 82 members, the price we might have to pay for an agreed scheme would probably be higher.”²⁵ In private, British officials fully acknowledged the role of science as an exclusionary gatekeeper.

The initial US position was to exclude the Soviet Union completely from an international regime for Antarctica. The North Americans proposed the creation of an 8-power condominium including the seven claimant powers and the United States, which would be accompanied by a US claim to the unclaimed sector of Antarctica (and possibly other sectors). The British believed that the exclusion of the Soviet Union would be diplomatically untenable, and they advocated the creation of an international regime including both the United States and the Soviet Union without the need for an official US claim, which they thought might further destabilize the situation and incite the Russians into making claims of their own. As the talks progressed, US officials (especially in the State Department) were coming around to the British way of thinking, and by January 1958 the United States had produced proposals for internationalization that involved the Soviet Union (in the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ United Kingdom Delegation to United Nations to Foreign Office, 18 January 1958. TNA, FO 371/131905. The UK delegation added “it would, we think, be useful to explain the plans for a conference to the Secretary General before they are put forward publicly. His influence, one way or the other, would prove an important factor.”

conference if not necessarily in the regime) and, according to British officials, “were already very much more acceptable.”²⁶

In January 1958, the US State Department presented Britain, Australia, and NZ with its revised plans for an international regime for Antarctica, which would include negotiation with the Soviet Union, accompanied by a possible US territorial claim.²⁷ Although the British felt that an international regime would have a greater chance of success if it was not accompanied by such a proclamation of rights, they went along with the US suggestion. The State Department wanted the plan for internationalization to be launched publicly in the middle of 1958 and thought it best to begin discussions with Chile, France, and Norway immediately (Argentina was in the middle of an election campaign). The Australians and New Zealanders, supported by the British, were more hesitant. They wanted to make sure that there was first agreement among the four governments participating in the secret quadripartite negotiations before the plans were shared with other interested countries. The Australians and New Zealanders also reacted with “horror” to a US suggestion that Japan should be invited to participate, saying that Japan had renounced all rights in Antarctica in the peace treaty that ended the Second World War and should not now “be allowed to creep in by the back door.”²⁸

The Australian government took the toughest line at the negotiations, fearing a continuation of the Soviet presence in the Australian Antarctic sector. They were

²⁶ H.A. Hankey minute, 10 January 1958. TNA, FO 371/131905.

²⁷ Memorandum From the Special Adviser on Antarctica (Daniels) to the Secretary of State. Washington, 14 January 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no.265. (Source: Department of State, Central Files 702.022/1-1458. Secret. Drafted by Daniels and sent through S/S and Murphy, who initialed it.)

²⁸ British Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, 14 January 1958. TNA, FO 371/131905.

in fact quite keen for the United States to make a claim.²⁹ In January 1958, the Australian Cabinet met to discuss the internationalization of Antarctica, and they came out strongly against the proposals being discussed in Washington.³⁰ This Australian position threatened to ruin any prospects for an international regime and the resolution of the Anglo-Argentine-Chilean dispute. However, British officials noted optimistically that the Australian position was not final.³¹ In contrast to the Australians, Mr. Nash, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, was in favor of some form of internationalization. His idealistic attitude in fact went even further, and he willingly contemplated a genuine internationalization of Antarctica under the auspices of the UN.

Australian intransigence on the Antarctic question at the Washington talks coincided with British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's visit to the Antipodes in January and February 1958. He went first to New Zealand where he held talks with Prime Minister Nash. At talks on 23 January, the two Prime Ministers discussed the Antarctic question and ways "to move Australians to a more amenable position."³² Macmillan and Nash concurred that an Antarctic conference leading to some form of limited international regime for Antarctica was the best course of action. In the discussions the two leaders agreed on three points:

- (i) UK, US and NZ now hold similar views, but Australians had apparently turned against idea of internationalization, at least with Russian participation.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ H.A.A. Hankey Minute, 24 January 1958. TNA, FO 371/131905.

³¹ Ibid.

³² UK High Commissioner in New Zealand to Commonwealth Relations Office, 24 January 1958. TNA, FO 371/131905.

(ii) There was no prospect of general settlement on basis of national claims, particularly since Chilean and Argentine disputes with UK could not, because of their refusal, be brought to arbitration, maintenance of UK position against Chilean and Argentine claims involved wasteful expenditure.

(iii) As long as national claims were pursued there would be no agreement. Hence an international scheme was only feasible solution.³³

Macmillan believed Australia's position on maintaining territorial sovereignty to be "unrealistic." Interestingly, the British Prime Minister wanted to "broaden the basis of any international authority." Drawing again on the justification of practicality, he even contemplated the inclusion of India, adding, "we would not want the Afro-Asians to propose some impractical scheme." Macmillan concluded by saying that the British idea was to "freeze" claims. Nash agreed to this "on the basis that claims would be in suspended animation."

Macmillan's suggestion to Nash that India should be included in the international authority for Antarctica immediately raised alarm bells among British officials.³⁴ In a telegram from the Commonwealth Relations Office in London to the UK High Commissioner in Australia, British officials noted, "Indian membership of High Authority (Governing Body) has never been seriously contemplated by us and would almost certainly arouse strong American and presumably Australian opposition." While the CRO noted that the inclusion of India might help to "buy off potential Afro-Asian opposition to the scheme as a whole and act as insurance against possible trouble at the UN from that quarter," they added that everything really depended on the Russian attitude. The CRO went on to outline the objections

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Commonwealth Relations Office to UK High Commissioner in Australia, 28 January 1958. TNA, FO 371/131905.

to Indian participation, in order that these could be put to Macmillan before his meeting with the Australian Prime Minister.³⁵ The official condescension towards the idea of Indian participation in an international regime reveals much about Britain's plans for retaining political influence in a postcolonial Antarctica, and the exclusionary practices that would be used to bring these plans about.

Following the Prime Minister's visit to New Zealand, a series of press leaks began to reveal the nature of the discussions on the future of Antarctica. On the 27 January, *The Times* reported that Macmillan had stated that "Australia was particularly interested in the suggestion by Mr. Nash, the New Zealand Prime Minister, that the Antarctic should be put under UN Trusteeship," and that he would be discussing this proposal with the Australian Government.³⁶ The British Prime Minister appears to have made no such statement. However, on 29 January, the New Zealand Prime Minister did make a statement that came close to jeopardizing the secrecy of the quadripartite negotiations.³⁷

In February 1958, in response to the press leaks, Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister, made a statement in Canberra calling for Antarctica to be a free zone and not a base to be fought over for military ends. This statement won him praise in the international press.³⁸ A leaked report on the front page of the *Daily*

³⁵ Commonwealth Relations Office to UK High Commissioner in Australia, 28 January 1958. TNA, FO 371/131905.

³⁶ *The Times*, cutting dated 27 January 1958. TNA FO 371/131905.

³⁷ In Washington, Daniels commented that "the chances of maintaining secrecy have been somewhat lessened by Mr. Nash's recent public statement." British Embassy Washington to Foreign Office, 30 January 1958. TNA, FO 371/131905.

³⁸ See, for example, article in the *Giornale D'Italia*. Javier Lira Merino (Embajada de Chile en Italia) al Ministerio de RR.EE., 14 February 1958. RR.EE., "Año Geofísico Internacional. Oficinas llegados 1956 al 1959."

Telegraph on 12 February gave a “fairly accurate resume” of the British position on Antarctica, to the apparent annoyance of the Foreign Office.³⁹

Although Britain and the United States had certain differences of opinion regarding Antarctica, particularly concerning the question of claims, by this stage the two countries were in broad agreement over the need for some sort of international regime. British and American officials worked in partnership to achieve this desired solution. Following Macmillan’s statement, the United States set about deciding how best to internationalize Antarctica. There was agreement between the two countries that that the United States, rather than Great Britain, was best placed to initiate an international discussion on the future of Antarctica. But there remained internal debate over whether or not the Soviet Union should be invited to join and whether the United States should make a territorial claim to Antarctica.⁴⁰ This latter question had dogged US Antarctic policymaking for the previous twenty years.⁴¹ By early March 1958, the Eisenhower Government had agreed upon a course of action

³⁹ Circular Telegram From the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Posts, 15 February 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 267. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 702.022/2-1558. Secret. Drafted by Daniels on Feb 14; cleared by Murphy, ARA, and EUR; and approved and signed by Herter. Sent to BA, Santiago, Paris, Oslo, Brussels, Moscow, Ottawa, Tokyo, New Delhi, Pretoria, Mexico City, and Rio de Janeiro, and repeated to Canberra, London, and Wellington).

⁴⁰ Memorandum of Discussion at the 357th Meeting of the NSC, Washington, 6 March 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 268. (Source: Eisenhower Library, Whitman File. Top Secret; Eyes Only. Prepared by Gleason on March 7). See also, Brian Roberts, “Historical Note to the Antarctic Treaty Conference,” 1959. SPRI, MS1308/9: “... had no regrets that the US Government had put out, as their own, proposals which had originated from a British initiative. Since they are not themselves claimants and have never recognized the claims of others in the Antarctic, the Americans were in a stronger position than we ourselves to convene a Conference. Also it was felt that for us to take the initiative would be interpreted as a sign of weakness on our part by the Argentines and Chileans, whose attitude towards participation in the Conference might have hardened accordingly.”

⁴¹ Klotz, *America on the ice: Antarctic policy issues*. Moore, "Tethered to an Iceberg: United States Policy toward the Antarctic, 1939-49." Moore, "Bungled publicity: Little America big America and the rationale for non-claimancy 1946-61."

to follow, which was set out in NSC 5804/1.⁴² They would seek agreement for an Antarctic organization that would include the Soviet Union; if this failed they would attempt to reach a consensus with the seven claimant powers.

The United States Government regularly consulted with Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. The British backed the United States and felt that the arrangement would be open to less criticism in the United Nations if the countries involved went ahead “full steam” taking into consideration potential objections that might be voiced.⁴³ Lord Hood, the British representative at these meetings felt that “an effective, well-rounded program would impress members of the UN and the UN would then be more likely to leave ‘hands off.’” The decision to invite the Soviet Union was taken because of fear of Russian plans in the Antarctic, and the “Red Scare” would also prove to be a useful tool to frighten Argentina and Chile into participation.⁴⁴ On 24 March 1958, the United States government widened the consultation process to include all eleven nations that would be invited to participate in the negotiations.⁴⁵ Before calling for such a conference, US officials wanted to know whether there would be broad acceptance of the two basic objectives:

⁴² National Security Council Report, NSC 5804/1, 8 March 1958. NSA, Presidential Directives PD00545.

⁴³ Memorandum of a Conversation, Embassy of NZ, Washington, 10 March 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 270. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 702.022/3-1058. Secret. Drafted by Luboensky.)

⁴⁴ Acta de la Sección Antártica, 14 October 1958. RR.EE., “Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.”

⁴⁵ Aide Memore From the Department of State to Certain Embassies, 24 March 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 271. (Source: Department of State Central Files, 702.022/3-2458. Secret. Drafted by Daniels on March 21; cleared by ARA, EUR, FE, AF, IO, and L; and handed to representatives from the Embassies of Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, Norway, NZ, the Union of South Africa, the Soviet Union, and the UK.)

a) Freedom of scientific investigation throughout Antarctica by citizens, organizations, and governments of all countries; and a continuation of the international scientific cooperation which is being carried out so successfully during the current IGY.

b) International agreement to ensure that Antarctica be used for peaceful purposes only.

Within the US Government, several members of the Operations Coordinating Board voiced their concern that consultation with the Soviet Union “violated the spirit, if not the words of NSC 5804/1.⁴⁶ General Cutler, for example, alleged that the State Department had “decided to go off on its own.” Nevertheless, upon receiving generally favorable replies to its enquiry, the State Department pushed ahead with its plans, and, in May, President Eisenhower issued invitations to eleven nations to meet in Washington for preliminary negotiations.⁴⁷

The twelve nations that participated in the Washington negotiations were those that had conducted scientific research in Antarctica during the IGY. This choice of participants confirmed the relationship between science and politics in Antarctica.⁴⁸ During the negotiations, the question of which countries could participate caused one of the major disagreements, with the Soviet Union fearing that it could be isolated because of the exclusion of other Eastern Bloc countries. The other eleven countries generally wished to maintain the small select group of

⁴⁶ Preliminary Notes on the OCB Meeting, 9 April 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 272. (Source: Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62D 430. Secret. No drafting information appears on the source text.)

⁴⁷ Editorial Note, 28 April 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 274.

⁴⁸ Circular Airgram From the Department of State to All Diplomatic Posts, 20 June 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 275. (Source: Dep of State, Central Files, 399.829/6-2058. Official Use Only. Drafted by Daniels on June 13 and cleared with ARA, EUR, FE, IO, L and NEA.)

“interested” countries that they believed would be more workable. India’s proposals to raise the Antarctic question at the United Nations also gave importance to the question of who had the right to participate. The criterion that a country must be active in Antarctic scientific research to get a seat at the political negotiating table offered a convenient means of controlling participation without appearing blatantly exclusionary.

ARGENTINE AND CHILEAN RESPONSE

Neither the Argentine nor the Chilean governments were particularly keen on the idea of internationalizing Antarctica. Early in the discussions, both governments let the United States know that they would oppose any solution that involved the sacrifice of claims.⁴⁹ In reply to Harold Macmillan’s call for internationalization, the Chilean Foreign Ministry issued a statement rejecting any such moves.⁵⁰ Similarly, in response to the preliminary enquiries of the United States regarding an Antarctic conference, the Chilean ambassador in Washington replied that he personally thought the proposal a fine idea, but was not sure whether his government agreed.⁵¹ After greater consideration, involving members of Committee of Foreign Relations from both Legislative Chambers, the Chileans felt that they could not be left outside such negotiations initiated by the United States.⁵² The Chilean Antarctic

⁴⁹ Memorandum of a Conversation, Embassy of NZ, Washington, 10 March 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 270. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 702.022/3-1058. Secret. Drafted by Luboensky).

⁵⁰ Undated Memorandum (mid-1958), Ministerio de RR.EE. RR.EE., “Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.”

⁵¹ Preliminary Notes on the OCB Meeting, 23 April 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 273. (Source: Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62D 430. Secret. No Drafting information appears on the source text.)

⁵² Undated Memorandum (mid-1958), Ministerio de RR.EE. RR.EE., “Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.”

Commission, however, could not be convened in time to give its response to the invitation.⁵³ Upon accepting the US invitation, the Chilean Government made it clear that its situation was distinct from those nations which had possessions in the Antarctica that could be classified as “colonial.”⁵⁴

With attendance at the Washington meeting already decided upon, the Chilean Antarctic Commission met in July to discuss the present state of Antarctic policy.⁵⁵ The majority of the members of the Commission expressed their agreement with the decision to send a delegation to the preliminary conference: to be excluded would have been more dangerous than to attend, and attendance alone did not mean Chile had to comply with any of the resolutions of the meeting. They discussed favorably the prospect that the United States would cede their East Base in Marguerite Bay, held out as a carrot by the North Americans. General Cañas was happy with the prospect of receiving this base, and he suggested that everything should be done to achieve this result as quickly as possible, “for the psychological influence that this would have on world opinion.” He also wanted Base Risopatrón to be reconstructed. There was also further discussion of the creation of an Antarctic Institute to oversee Chile’s scientific labors in Antarctica. Over the course of the IGY, especially when it looked like it would lead into political negotiations, General Cañas seems to have become disillusioned with the direction events were going, and he was replaced as head of the Chilean IGY Commission. In relation to the Antarctic Treaty negotiations in Washington, Cañas noted forcefully: “I am a

⁵³ It seems like the proposals caught Chile unawares: for example, they had to convene a reconstituted Antarctica Commission and they were unable to reconstruct Base Risopatrón.

⁵⁴ Comisión Chilena Antártica, 22 July 1958. RR.EE., “Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.”

⁵⁵ Comisión Chilena Antártica, 23 July 1958. RR.EE., “Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.”

skeptic. In each one of these accords we are losing rights. In Antarctica the weapon is science (científica). There is a war for dominion and the weapon is science (científica).”⁵⁶ The General had urged Chilean participation in the IGY to protect Chilean rights, not to see them diminished.

By the late 1950s, many people in Argentina and Chile – quite possibly the majority of the electorate in both cases – had come to believe firmly that Antarctica belonged to their respective countries.⁵⁷ To give up claims to Antarctica would therefore be tantamount to ceding national territory. Such popular attitudes reflect the success of twenty years of government propaganda, hardened by growing nationalism. Whereas twenty years earlier the two South American Governments, especially the Chileans, had struggled to convince people of the efficacy of their claims, by this stage public opinion was to some extent driving government policy by demanding that no concessions be made with respect to Antarctic sovereignty.

PREPARATORY NEGOTIATIONS

By early June 1958, all eleven countries invited to the preliminary negotiations had accepted.⁵⁸ On 13 June, informal meetings began in Washington, mostly in the Board Room of the National Academy of Sciences.⁵⁹ Most of the

⁵⁶ Pinochet de la Barra, *Medio siglo de recuerdos antárticos: memorias*.

⁵⁷ It is very difficult to gauge public opinion directly in either country. However, the behavior of the governments in both countries, at the negotiations in Washington and in the subsequent ratification debates, suggests that they had to take seriously the widespread beliefs that Antarctica formed an “integral part” of their respective territories.

⁵⁸ Circular Airgram From the Department of State to All Diplomatic Posts, 20 June 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 275 (Source: Dep of State, Central Files, 399.829/6-2058. Official Use Only. Drafted by Daniels on June 13 and cleared with ARA, EUR, FE, IO, L and NEA.)

⁵⁹ Status Report on Antarctica, 24 August 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 276. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 702.022/9-2458.

representatives hoped to begin discussion of substantive matters in order to lay the groundwork for the proposed conference, but the Soviet Union wished to limit the talks to procedural matters and the question of where and when to hold a conference. The Russian delegation also insisted that other countries with a desire to participate should be invited to join. In the early days of the preliminary negotiations, the obdurate Soviet position significantly delayed progress.⁶⁰

Another hurdle was the hard-line position adopted by Argentina and Chile regarding their sovereignty claims in Antarctica. Something of a siege mentality developed between the two South American claimants, which might be seen as a tacit revival of the earlier idea of a “South American Antarctica.”⁶¹ Early in the meeting, the Chilean and Argentine delegations set out their positions with long diatribes on their rights to the southern continent. Neither country wished for an early conference, despite the risk that the matter might be discussed in the United Nations.⁶² Enrique Gajardo, the Chilean representative, made it clear that Chile considered Antarctica part of its metropolitan territory, “as much as Chiloé or any other province,” adding once again that the Antarctic Peninsula was a geological extension of Chilean territory.⁶³ This position, he explained, would determine

Confidential. Addressed to the Department of State Duty Officer. The source text is initialed by Murphy and bears the notation “Sec saw.”)

⁶⁰ Acta de la Sección Antártica, 14 October 1958. RR.EE., “Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.”

⁶¹ For example, there was a prior interchange of ideas between Chile and Argentina before the meetings in Washington. Undated Memorandum (mid-1958) Ministerio de RR.EE. RR.EE., “Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.”

⁶² Status Report on Antarctica, 24 August 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 276. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 702.022/9-2458. Confidential. Addressed to the Department of State Duty Officer. The source text is initialed by Murphy and bears the notation “Sec saw.”)

⁶³ Acta de la Sección Antártica, 14 October 1958. RR.EE., “Departamento de Limites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958.”

Chile's attitude towards the Treaty. He left no doubt among the other delegates that Chile would oppose any "internationalization" of its territory. The Chilean representative reported that the presence of the Soviet Union at the meetings gave the preliminary negotiations a political, rather than a technical or juridical, character. He added that the Soviet investment in the IGY had military and strategic objectives, including the possible stationing of guided missiles.⁶⁴ This fear of the Soviet Union – played up by the Great Britain and the United States – provided a significant motivation for Argentina and Chile to cooperate with the rest of the "Free World" powers.

Throughout the preliminary negotiations, Chile and Argentina maintained a close alliance based on the Vargara-La Rosa protocol of 1948.⁶⁵ Gajardo reported that their co-operation was such that immediately after a speech by the Chilean delegate, "the Argentine delegate would immediately seek the floor to support the Chilean position." The Chilean delegate informed the Chilean Antarctic Commission that Chile should act as "Lord of the House" in Antarctica, inviting other countries to conduct scientific research in its territory. The Argentine-Chilean alliance was bitterly opposed by General Cañas, who saw such actions as taking Chile towards a condominium with Argentina.⁶⁶

The twelve countries all agreed on the "pacific use" of Antarctica. Indeed, the Soviet Delegation surprised the other participants with its zealous advocacy of complete pacifism.⁶⁷ Chile and Argentina had to defend the participation of Armed

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Cañas stressed once again his idea of Chile as a Pacific nation.

⁶⁷ Acta de la Sección Antártica, 14 October 1958. RR.EE., "Departamento de Límites: Comisión Chilena Antártica, 1949-56. 1958."

Forces in Antarctic research and logistical operations. In this position they were supported by Great Britain. In relation to the suspension of territorial claims there were widely divergent views.⁶⁸ The Soviet Union initially did not want the question of sovereignty claims to be dealt with at all at this stage. The other eleven countries – especially Argentina, Chile, Australia, and Great Britain – expressed that the suspension of claims was a *sine qua non* of the Treaty, and without it, scientific freedom would be impossible.

By November 1958, the Soviet position had softened a little, and its delegation declared that it would be willing to discuss certain substantive matters during the preliminary negotiations.⁶⁹ This was a major breakthrough, since without such prior discussion a number of the other participants refused to agree to a conference. However, although there was a general acceptance that Washington should be the place to host the conference, plans to hold it in early 1959 were frustrated by continued disagreements over such issues as freezing the legal status quo, the inclusion of the high seas, the use of military personnel for peaceful purposes, provisions for an adequate inspection system, and the membership of the proposed treaty.⁷⁰ Great Britain and Australia remained adamant that the major substantive issues should be agreed upon before the start of a conference, hoping to avoid last minute surprises or embarrassment and wanting to make sure that Russia

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Memorandum from the Special Adviser on Antarctica (Daniels) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Murphy), 6 November 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 278. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 702.022/12-658. Confidential. Drafted by Luboensky.)

⁷⁰ 281. Memorandum From the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Murphy) to the Secretary of State, 20 January 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 281. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/1-2059. Confidential. Drafted by Owen; cleared with ARA; sent through S/S; and initialed by Daniels, Herter, and Murphy. The source text bears the notation “Sec saw.”)

should have no excuse to decline to attend the conference and “posing in the General Assembly as champions of Powers which had not been invited to join the 12.”⁷¹ The talks continued through the early months of 1959, and gradually a consensus emerged, at least over what should be discussed.⁷²

Throughout the preliminary conference, the United States, Great Britain and their “Free World” allies continued to worry about Soviet intentions in Antarctica. At a Operations Coordinating Board meeting in December 1958, for example, the CIA reported that the Soviet intention was to replace the United States as the leading power in the Antarctic region.⁷³ Their plans included establishing a network of new scientific bases, utilizing a nuclear powered icebreaker, including the Poles in Antarctic research and even launching earth satellites from both the North and the South Poles. It was believed that polar launching of spacecraft would be safer due to the reduced presence of a radiation layer of electrified particles, although the CIA was not convinced that the Soviet Union yet had the technical capabilities to conduct such launches. The North Americans realized that they were falling behind the Soviet Union in the fields of oceanography, traverses in the unclaimed sector, observations by rocketry, and satellite tracking systems.⁷⁴ Mr. Christian Herter,

⁷¹ Brian Roberts, “Historical Note to the Antarctic Treaty Conference,” 1959. SPRI, MS1308/9.

⁷² Brian Roberts noted that the reasons for the *volte face* in Russian policy were unclear. He speculated: “They may have started by fearing that they would be put in an inferior position as a non-claimant power, or left in a minority of one against a majority which would have some measure of control over the area. When they realized that neither of these would be the case (since the tacit liquidation of the old regime will not now involve its replacement by a system of full international control), and that the opportunities for making propaganda were very limited, they may have preferred to present themselves as striving to reduce international tension wherever possible.” *Ibid.*

⁷³ Preliminary Notes on the Operations Coordinating Board Meeting, 10 December 1958. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 279. (Source: Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430. Secret. No drafting information appears on the source text.)

⁷⁴ Preliminary Notes on the OCB Meeting, 14 January 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2. United Nations and General International Matters, no. 280. (Source: Department of State, OCB Files: Lot 62 D 430. Secret. No drafting information appears on the source text.)

Former Governor of Massachusetts and Under Secretary of State, recalled that in his briefing for the meeting, he thought it appropriate to cite “Seward’s Folly” as a benchmark in US thinking on near-pole geography. He said he realized that the citation and his view on the potential importance of Antarctic might lead to the area becoming known as “Herter’s Folly.”⁷⁵ Wexler briefed at these meetings saying that the Soviets were good at sharing meteorological data, but did not share oceanographic data that took longer to develop.⁷⁶ By the end of May 1959, the informal working group on Antarctica agreed that a conference for the drafting of the Antarctic Treaty would be held in Washington D.C. beginning on 25 October.⁷⁷

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

As a statement of the importance of the negotiations to Great Britain, Macmillan’s Government appointed Sir Esler Denning, a former ambassador to Japan and a man of great experience within the Colonial Empire, to head its representation at the Washington Conference. Other international delegates of “high caliber” began to arrive in Washington from the beginning of October 1959.⁷⁸ As a demonstration of the uncertainty of the negotiations, the conference actually opened ten days earlier than planned on 15 October. Despite the months of preparatory negotiations, when the twelve countries met in Washington for the official Antarctic Conference,

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Scientists were influential in US Antarctic policy making: Dr. Alan Waterman of the NSF also briefed on Soviet interests.

⁷⁷ Memorandum of Discussion at the 48th Meeting of the Informal Working Group on Antarctica, 23 July 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 290. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 702.022/7-2359.)

⁷⁸ Preliminary Notes on the OCB Meeting, 23 October 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 292. (Source: Department of State OCB Files: Lot 62D 430. Confidential.)

nobody knew exactly what form any “Antarctic Treaty” would take, or indeed, whether such an agreement could even be reached. The United States was the only country to prepare a complete draft Treaty as a working paper for the conference.⁷⁹ The Soviet Union stated that it agreed with all articles except for the first, sixth, seventh, and ninth, for which it submitted its own re-drafts.⁸⁰ Other countries, including Great Britain, submitted redrafts of particular articles that they wanted to see changed.⁸¹

The dynamic force behind the conference was Ambassador Paul C. Daniels of the United States, although he was not universally popular with the other delegations. As the State Department’s Antarctic specialist, Daniels had been one of the leading players in the quadripartite meetings on the future of Antarctica since mid-1957. Shortly before the conference opened, Daniels reported his personal views on the proceedings to the Operations Coordinating Board.⁸² He was up front that he believed that the Treaty’s administrative measures would serve as a basis for a “supra-national administration of Antarctica,” although he wished to play this down during the negotiations. The OCB was keen to gain the utmost propaganda points out of the conference: “if handled correctly,” Mr. Harr believed, “the US could be placed in a positive, enlightened and cooperative posture, indicating we are moving ahead in the resolution of international problems and serving as a case of deeds not words in the present East-West atmosphere.” Daniels said that he felt it more important to get a good treaty first and then make propaganda, to which Harr

⁷⁹ Brian Roberts, “Historical Note to the Antarctic Treaty Conference,” 1959. SPRI, MS1308/9.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Preliminary Notes on the OCB Meeting, 7 Oct 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 292. (Source: Department of State OCB Files: Lot 62D 430. Confidential.)

agreed, stating “it is best not to kiss the cook until you taste the cookies.” Other members of the OCB saw the Antarctic conference as an opportunity to gauge the possible Soviet attitude in the upcoming Geneva test ban negotiations, showing, once again, that far from being a “Pole apart,” Antarctica had come to occupy a central place in East-West relations. Especially during the early part of the conference, the two superpowers remained on relatively amicable terms during the negotiations, the heads of delegation, for example, meeting informally to discuss the conference proceedings.⁸³

The first serious crisis in the negotiations occurred before the conference had even begun. At a party for the delegates, Andreani, the French member of the working group, stated that he had just received instructions from his government not to accept any freezing clause relating to sovereignty.⁸⁴ French government lawyers apparently questioned the legal validity of such a clause in French law.⁸⁵ After some wavering, the Argentine delegation appeared to support Article IV, although the Chilean position remained unknown into the conference.⁸⁶ By the second week of the conference, the French position had become a stumbling block that many delegates felt could not be overcome without a change in the official instructions. On October 20, the French proposed that paragraph 1c) of Article IV should be

⁸³ Memorandum of a Conversation Between the Head of the Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) and the Head of the Soviet Delegation (Tunkin), 28 October 1959. FRUS, 1958-60. Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 300.

⁸⁴ Brian Roberts' Antarctic Conference Journal: News of French rejection of the freezing clause. SPRI, MS1308/9.

⁸⁵ The French representative “insisted that this paragraph implied a legal negation of France’s rights in Antarctica and was, therefore, unacceptable to France.” Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State, 21 October, 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/10-2159. Confidential.)

⁸⁶ Brian Roberts' Antarctic Conference Journal: second week. SPRI, MS1308/9.

deleted.⁸⁷ This raised objections from all the other delegations, with the Argentines and Chileans saying that they accepted the draft form of Article IV in principle, but would like to see some of the wording improved.⁸⁸

The Argentines and Chileans wished to dispense with discussion of the term “treaty” altogether, feeling that it preordained the result of the conference. According to Brian Roberts, the South Americans “made themselves thoroughly unpopular by obstructive tactics and long speeches,” although, importantly, they were forced to give way when they found themselves in a complete minority. In contrast, Roberts noted that the Soviet Delegation was generally cooperative, adding, “it is unusual to see the Russians in such complete accord.”

The Argentine delegation initially focused on their objections against Article II, the freedom of scientific investigation. This was one of the points that many felt had been accepted by everybody. The Argentines feared that the current wording of the article would give the Russians complete freedom to do whatever they liked in Antarctica, with the consequent erosion of national sovereignty for the claimant powers. This was something that public opinion in Argentina could not accept. The Argentina position was supported by the Chilean delegation, but only half-heartedly, and the Chileans later let the other delegations know that they would accept the article in its present form. When pressed in private negotiations with the Australians, New Zealanders, Chileans, United States, and British, the Argentine delegation

⁸⁷ Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State, 20 October 1959. FRUS, 1958-60. Volume 2. United Nations and General International Matters, no. 296. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/10-2059. Confidential.)

⁸⁸ Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State, 21 October, 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/10-2159. Confidential.)

admitted that what it really wanted was the power of veto by claimant powers to be implicit in Article II: this was quite obviously unacceptable to non-claimants, including the United States, which did not recognize any sovereignty claims. Roberts reported that in private discussion on October 20, 1959:

The Argentine first informed Sir Esler privately that he could only accept his proposal with the addition of the words “the greatest possible measure of” before “freedom”. When Sir Esler replied that he could not agree to this since it would certainly not be acceptable to other delegations, he said “then there will be no Treaty.”⁸⁹

The British appeared willing to help the Argentines appease public opinion in Argentina, even going as far as drafting a new Article II.⁹⁰ The Soviet, New Zealand, and Japanese delegations refused to accept the Argentine insistence on the addition of “the greatest possible” before “freedom in scientific investigation.”⁹¹ The head of the Argentine delegation reported to the other heads of delegations, “any obligation stronger than an agreement to cooperate would not be acceptable to Argentina and, if insisted upon, would force Argentina to withdraw.”⁹² On October 21, however, a New Zealand proposal to limit scientific freedom to that “initiated and applied during the IGY” seemed to offer a possible resolution of the impasse created by Argentina’s objections to complete scientific freedom.

⁸⁹ Brian Roberts’ Antarctic Conference Journal: second week. SPRI, MS1308/9.

⁹⁰ Brian Roberts’ Antarctic Conference Journal: second week . SPRI, MS1308/9.

⁹¹ Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State, 20 October 1959. FRUS, 1958-60. Volume 2. United Nations and General International Matters, no. 296. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/10-2059. Confidential.)

⁹² Ibid.

Shortly after objecting to the article on scientific freedom, in discussion of the first article on the “peaceful utilization” of Antarctica, the Argentine delegation dropped a second bombshell on the conference by proposing a complete ban on nuclear explosions: “Nuclear tests and explosions of any type, regardless of their character and purposes, shall be prohibited.”⁹³ This proposal came completely out of the blue. The Soviet amendment to Article I expressly called for a ban on all weapons tests in Antarctica, but this went much further by ruling out nuclear explosions of all types, including those for peaceful purposes. With echoes of India’s worries in 1956, the Argentine delegate argued that the grounds for such an exclusion were fears of “radiation danger.” By introducing the question of nuclear explosions into the proceedings, with all its resonances with the Cold War, the Argentines appeared to be (deliberately) attempting to destabilize the conference. The goodwill between the two superpowers that Brian Roberts had noted the previous week rapidly evaporated. The Chilean delegation made a passionate speech saying that they could not contemplate any limitations on their right to self-defense under the Rio Treaty (which stretched to the South Pole), further politicized proceedings.

The United States objected to the Argentine proposal for a complete ban on nuclear explosions on the grounds that nuclear explosions did not fall within the objects of the conference, and was a matter for the Geneva conference on Nuclear Tests.⁹⁴ Additionally, the North Americans felt that a nuclear ban might “dangerously limit scientific enquiry.” However, after agreeing that Article I was not the ideal place to discuss nuclear weapons, the Argentines, in partnership with

⁹³ Brian Roberts’ Antarctic Conference Journal: beginning of second week. SPRI, MS1308/9.

⁹⁴ Brian Roberts’ Antarctic Conference Journal: second week. SPRI, MS1308/9

the Australians, proposed an entirely new article that would deal with the nuclear question:

No nuclear or thermo-nuclear experiments or explosions of a non-military nature, and no disposal of fissionable waste material shall take place in Antarctica except after notice to and consultation among the High Contracting Parties.⁹⁵

It was immediately agreed to change the initial clause to: “No detonations of nuclear or thermo-nuclear devices of a non-military nature.” After receiving instructions from his government, the Soviet delegate took a somewhat surprising stance. Rather than rejecting the Argentine-Australian proposal, the Soviet Union proposed to make the ban on nuclear explosions in Antarctica even more absolute by terminating the proposal with the word “Antarctica,” thereby eliminating the escape clause “except after notice to and consultation among the High Contracting Parties.”⁹⁶ Moscow’s newly acquired pacificism caught the United States and Great Britain by surprise, although the Soviet delegation added that they could accept a Treaty which had no such Article: if it was to be anti-nuclear it was to be very anti-nuclear. New Zealand supported the Russian call for a total nuclear prohibition.

The Argentines had brought the Cold War into the heart of the meeting, and this threatened to disrupt the relatively close working relationship between the

⁹⁵ Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State, 28 October 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 301. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/10-2859. Confidential.)

⁹⁶ Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State, 3 November 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 304. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/11-359. Confidential.)

United States and the Soviet Union. The British tried to come up with a phrase that would not use the terms “detonation” or “explosion,” which were felt to be too militaristic for the conceived “peaceful purposes” of nuclear materials.⁹⁷

Another major stumbling block was the question of accession: who should be able to join the Treaty? The Soviet Union proposed unlimited accession by other countries, while the United States and almost all the other countries favored a restricted access based on an active scientific presence in Antarctica, and limited to those countries who were members of the United Nations and their specialist agencies.⁹⁸ The Russians were particularly worried about being isolated as the only Eastern Bloc country in the Treaty and resented the possible exclusion of countries such as the People’s Republic of China and East Germany, which were not members of the United Nations. Interestingly, the Soviet Union supported the idea that membership should be limited to countries carrying out scientific research in Antarctica.⁹⁹ Chile, in particular, took the most exclusionary stance, arguing that no accession clause was necessary, since all twelve IGY Antarctic participants were present at the conference.¹⁰⁰ This elitism from a government that had formerly

⁹⁷ Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State, 6 November 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 306. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/11-659. Confidential.)

⁹⁸ Circular Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassies in the Countries Participating in the Conference on Antarctica, 24 October 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no.298. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/10-2459.)

⁹⁹ Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State, 26 October 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 299.

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State, 29 October 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 302.

stressed the “imperial” nature of some claims to Antarctica was a further blow to anti-colonialism in Antarctica.

Other points of contention included the question of whether or not there should be mandatory reference to the International Court of Justice of any disagreements between contracting parties, the boundaries covered by the proposed Treaty, the duration of the Treaty, and the idea of an administrative committee, and the question of legal jurisdiction in Antarctica. The Soviet Union, Argentina, and Chile all opposed mandatory reference to the International Court of Justice, while others, including Great Britain, thought this would be a useful framework to resolve disputes.¹⁰¹ The United States was adamant that high seas should be excluded from the boundaries of the region to be covered by the Antarctic Treaty. This question was made more difficult by the annual expansion and contraction of the Antarctic “continent” due to the freezing and melting of the sea ice. On the question of duration, Argentina and Chile supported a limited ten-year time period, while others, including Great Britain, argued that the Treaty should have no time limit. The countries opposed to a fixed duration suggested “that it would create a bad psychological effect to suggest that the treaty was temporary in nature, and pointing out that the contemplated Administrative Committee would be able to make recommendations for changes in the treaty when considered necessary.”¹⁰² The idea of an administrative committee was a particularly controversial suggestion, since it gave the Treaty the appearance of setting up an international government.

¹⁰¹ Brian Roberts’ Antarctic Conference Journal: change in writing procedure. 22/10/1959. SPRI, MS1308/9.

¹⁰² Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State, 26 October 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 299.

Such were the apparently irreconcilable differences between the twelve participating nations that it looked, for a while, as if no Treaty would be reached. After a visit by the French legal adviser, the French delegation agreed to the inclusion of section 1(c) in Article IV, thereby overcoming a fundamental disagreement.¹⁰³ However, going into November, three pressing concerns persisted: “(1) accession and the relationship of the treaty to third parties; (2) use of fissionable material; and (3) an article on the revision of the treaty.”¹⁰⁴ Additionally, the question of scientific freedom remained to be completely resolved, despite concessions by Argentina and the Soviet Union.

On the question of fissionable material, the Russians proved particularly obdurate. They seemed to fear that the “Free World” countries would benefit from any exemption clause to the detriment of the Eastern Bloc. Such fears were connected to the question of accession and the fact that Russia felt itself to be in an isolated minority of one within the negotiations. Nevertheless, Russian objections seem to have had an element of irrationality to them given that they supported either no mention of nuclear explosions or a complete prohibition. On 10 November, the Argentine Parliament passed a resolution calling for a complete ban on nuclear explosions in Antarctica.¹⁰⁵ This resolution was clearly designed to put pressure on

¹⁰³ See, for example, Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, 7 November 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 307. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/11-759, Confidential,

¹⁰⁴ Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State, 6 November 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 306. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/11-659. Confidential.)

¹⁰⁵ Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State, 11 November 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 308. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/11-1159. Confidential.)

the Treaty negotiators and legitimize Argentina's position. Australia and Chile supported the Argentine stance, although the Chilean delegate later "said he thought there should be permission for peaceful explosions in connection with scientific investigation of Antarctica or its development."¹⁰⁶ The United States did not like the idea of a prohibition of peaceful nuclear explosions, although they reasoned:

The inclusion of such a provision might have the effect of making Argentina and Chile view the treaty as providing a positive benefit to protection against fallout, that might go far toward overcoming their objections to Article II which they regard as a derogation to their sovereignty.¹⁰⁷

There was a precarious diplomatic balancing act. The United States was very keen to have Argentina and Chile on board, principally for the sake of unity among its Cold War allies.

On 16 November, the Argentine delegate declared that his Government would accept the revised compromise version of Article II, on the condition that an Article be included on nuclear explosions (with a unanimous consent clause, but including the high seas). The Soviet delegation, by then the only country insisting upon a complete ban, stalled the negotiations to consult with its government.¹⁰⁸ The United States negotiated with Argentina in order to get it to remove the inclusion of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Merchant), 12 November 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 309. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/11-1259. Confidential.)

¹⁰⁸ Memorandum From the Head of the US Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State. Washington, 16 November 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 312. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/11-1659. Confidential)

the high seas.¹⁰⁹ For a while it looked like the whole conference could founder on this question. The Soviet Delegation received instructions not to accept the provision that permitted such explosions with the prior consent of the contracting parties. The delegate stated “that this was for the reason that the prohibition of nuclear explosions was a matter of principle and not subject to waiver, making reference to the Geneva meetings.”¹¹⁰

Right until the end of November, it remained uncertain whether any agreement could be reached. US officials feared that the Soviet Union had decided that it did not want a treaty, and that their delegation was trying to wreck the negotiations.¹¹¹ In the end, the Soviet Union compromised on the “prior consent” clause of the nuclear question, while the United States accepted the exclusion of UN Specialized agencies.¹¹² In the nature of all compromises not everybody was happy, but the resulting formulation offered a way forward and ensured that the negotiations would not collapse. A thirty-year duration for the Treaty proved acceptable to all parties: not short enough to be seen as temporary, but not long enough to be seen as indefinite. Without the genuine desire of both the United States and the Soviet Union to reach a Treaty, these compromises would not have been made and there

¹⁰⁹ Memorandum From the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Merchant) to the Head of the Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger), 17 November 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 313.

¹¹⁰ Memorandum From the Head of the Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs (Merchant), 17 November 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 314. (Source: Department of State, Central Files, 399.829/11-1759. Confidential).

¹¹¹ Memorandum From the Head of the Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Merchant), 25 November 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 323.

¹¹² Memorandum From the Head of the Delegation to the Conference on Antarctica (Phleger) to the Secretary of State, 24 November 1959. FRUS, 1958-60, Volume 2, United Nations and General International Matters, no. 322.

would have been no Antarctic Treaty. On 1 December 1959, the representatives of the twelve countries signed the Antarctic Treaty. The Treaty then had to be ratified by all twelve signatories before coming into effect.

Conclusion: From Imperialism to Globalization

The signing of the Antarctic Treaty created a limited international regime for the Antarctic continent that brought an end to the active phase of the sovereignty dispute between Britain, Argentina, and Chile (See Appendix). Describing the political developments of Antarctica immediately after the Second World War, the environmental historian Stephen Pyne has written:

Never subject to colonialism in any meaningful way, Antarctica was increasingly caught up in the rhetoric and politics of postwar anti-colonialism. It became, in the words of worried observers, a ‘continent in search of sovereignty.’ More aptly, it became a continent in search of an alternative to sovereignty.¹

The “alternative to sovereignty” initiated by the Antarctic Treaty was not a genuine internationalization of the sort proposed by India when it attempted to raise the “Antarctic Question” at the United Nations. Rather, it was a limited, members-only regime, in which sovereignty claims were suspended, not surrendered, and in which the signatories continued to exercise an active political influence within the Antarctic Treaty System. Instead of diminishing the political influence of the twelve signatories, the Antarctic Treaty reformulated and retained their influence. The Antarctic Treaty was not a completely closed regime: it contained mechanisms for other countries to accede, either as consultative or observing members.² But from its

¹ Pyne, *The ice*. 341.

² Consultative members that have demonstrated a substantial scientific presence in Antarctica and been approved by the existing membership exercise full voting rights. Observing members can attend the consultative meetings but have no vote.

outset, the conduct of “substantial scientific research” in Antarctica was the price of admission to this “exclusive club”, and this cost did not come cheaply.³ Scientific claims to environmental authority continued to legitimize the political rights of members of the Antarctic Treaty System, just as they had done for imperial powers before the signature of the treaty. The Antarctic Treaty System itself became a sort of “Frozen Empire” for the government of Antarctica.

This dissertation has suggested that the history of the Antarctic sovereignty dispute should be seen alongside the wider history of European decolonization that was taking place around the world at the same time. In a sense, the Antarctic Treaty itself can be seen as a treaty of decolonization, especially from the British perspective. By the terms of the Treaty the seven claimant nations willingly suspended their rights to exercise the traditional attributes of territorial sovereignty: the right to exclusive legal jurisdiction, the right to exclude others, the right to station military personnel, and so forth. But what came next? Sovereignty was not transferred to an independent nation state with a seat at the United Nations. Rather, sovereignty was handed over to an international treaty system in which individual nation states continue to retain significant political influence. The limited international regime created by the Antarctic Treaty was qualitatively different from the exclusive sovereignty claims that preceded it. In a sense, the Antarctic Treaty created the world’s first “globalized” continent, and contemporary studies of “globalization” offer a useful way of thinking about the changes and continuities contained in the creation of the Antarctic Treaty System.

³ During the IGY the 12 nations participating in Antarctic research between them spent \$280 million. Sullivan, *Assault on the unknown; the International Geophysical Year*. 305-306.

This chapter will begin by looking at the ratification of the Antarctic Treaty by Britain, Argentina, and Chile. Their contrasting attitudes towards the limited internationalization of the continent can be seen from the debates that took place over the ratification of the Treaty. The second section will consider the nature of the Antarctic Treaty System. It will examine the transition “from imperialism to globalization” in Antarctica, paying particular attention to the reformulation and retention of political interest in the continent. The final section will suggest that post-1959 Antarctica remains an excellent place for “doing environmental history” and examining the interconnections between human activity, human understanding, and the environment. By the terms of the Treaty, Antarctica became a “Continent for Science,” and claims to environmental authority continue to be used to justify political influence.

RATIFICATION

Following the signing of the Antarctic Treaty in Washington D.C. in December 1959, the treaty needed to be ratified by each of the twelve signatories in order to go into effect.⁴ The respective attitudes of Britain, Argentina, and Chile towards the Antarctic Treaty can be seen from the debates that took place over its ratification. The different views expressed during these debates also reflect the multiplicity of possible interpretations of the Antarctic Treaty. The absence of any formal administrative structures left the legal nature of the Antarctic Treaty deliberately vague. This vagueness proved to be a particular strength during the

⁴ Article XIII required unanimous ratification in order for the Treaty to go into effect. See Appendix.

ratification process, since the signatory governments could present the Treaty in ways that best suited their individual requirements.

On 31 May 1960, Great Britain became the first of the signatories to ratify the Antarctic Treaty. The ratification Bill passed through Parliament with relatively little opposition. The signature of the Antarctic Treaty represented a success for British diplomacy and for the Conservative government of Harold Macmillan. British politicians and officials had attained more or less exactly what they wanted. Limited internationalization effectively brought an end to the active phase of the sovereignty dispute with Argentina and Chile, while retaining British claims in a state of suspended animation and maintaining an active British role in the political decision making process within the Antarctic Treaty System. The sovereignty dispute had become costly both economically and diplomatically, and especially after the scientific advances made during the IGY, it no longer looked as if Antarctica was worth the costs of maintaining exclusive sovereignty. One of the biggest fears of British policy makers in relation to Antarctica had been the fear of setting a dangerous precedent that could be detrimental to other parts of its colonial empire. The Antarctic Treaty offered an honorable way for Britain to withdraw from the direct contest for Antarctic sovereignty, with no adverse consequences. In fact, by successfully substituting their contested formal claim to the Falkland Islands Dependencies with a virtually uncontested informal influence within the Antarctic Treaty System, the British arguably strengthened their political position in Antarctica.⁵

⁵ Thus the “decolonization” of Antarctica closely follows the argument set out in Louis and Robinson, “The Imperialism of Decolonization.”

The eagerness with which the British Parliament ratified the Antarctic Treaty also offers a different way of thinking about the “decline” of the British relationship with Argentina and Chile over the course of the twentieth century. Britain’s economic relationship with Chile had faded long before the outbreak of the active phase of the sovereignty dispute; Britain’s economic relationship with Argentina went into rapid and terminal decline precisely in the period between 1939 and 1959. From a diplomatic perspective, however, the Antarctic Treaty might be seen as an unlikely and unprecedented alliance between Great Britain, Argentina, and Chile. Even in the heyday of supposed British “informal empire” in South America, Britain had often been unable to bend either Argentina or Chile to its diplomatic will. This was revealed most starkly by the two countries’ neutrality throughout most of the First and Second World Wars.⁶ But by the late 1950s, the mutual fear of communism had the power to bring the three countries together in a way that opposition to fascism never had. The collapse of Britain’s economic interests in South America might therefore be seen as heralding a new era of closer diplomatic alignment. By this stage all three of these countries were largely beholden to the interests of the United States, and their alliance was part of a much broader grouping of the so-called Free World countries. This new found alliance was not reflected in particular fondness, especially between Britain and Argentina, but it was an alliance nonetheless.⁷ Such an observation suggests that the decline of British interests in South America was in fact a nuanced process in which decline was not absolute.

⁶ Humphreys, *Latin America and the Second World War*.

⁷ The mutual antipathy between Britain and Argentina would be revealed by the Argentine invasion of the *Islas Malvinas* in 1982 and the subsequent war with Great Britain. But even during this conflict the relationship between Britain and Argentina within the Antarctic Treaty System did not break down. Beck, *The international politics of Antarctica*. 177.

In Argentina the ratification of the Antarctic Treaty proved to be a lot more contentious.⁸ One of the leading intellectual opponents to ratification of the Treaty was Doctor Alberto Candiotti, a former ambassador of Argentina to Great Britain. Between the signature of the Treaty in December 1959 and the final Congressional Debate over its ratification in April 1961, Candiotti published a series of newspaper articles, pamphlets, and books condemning its provisions and arguing vehemently against its incorporation into Argentine law. He sought the opinions of leading authorities in constitutional law in order to argue that any treaty that ceded any part of Argentine territory was a violation of the Argentine constitution, the highest goal of which was to preserve the country's territorial integrity. In an open letter to President Frondizi published in *La Prensa* newspaper on 13 March 1961, Candiotti argued:

If our governments do not sign documents that signify a diminution of the solidity of our Antarctic rights, the problems of limits in our large territory in the southern continent will resolve themselves in our favor, before the population of the Argentine Republic reaches 100 million inhabitants. By then we will also have recuperated full sovereignty over all our islands in the South Atlantic.⁹

Such arguments drew upon the deep sentiments of territorial nationalism and geopolitical theory, which Argentine governments had been actively fostering for the previous twenty years.

⁸ For a full discussion of the ratification debate in Argentina, see Miryam Colacrai, "Continuidades y Cambios en la Política Antártica Argentina desde 1959 hasta el presente: conjugación de factores internos y externos" (Argentina, 2003).

⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.* 65.

In order to counter such hostile opinions, President Frondizi made a highly publicized trip to Deception Island in March 1961.¹⁰ In a sense, Frondizi was fighting for his very political survival, since this was a period of intense military opposition to his government, especially from the Army.¹¹ Speaking at the Argentine base on the island, the President made a two-part case for the ratification of the Treaty. Firstly, he argued that the Treaty in no way diminished Argentine claims to Antarctic sovereignty. Rather, the president suggested, the Treaty in some senses represented a form of international recognition for Argentine claims, since it made explicit reference to “existing territorial claims.” Secondly, Frondizi made an idealistic case that Argentine participation in the treaty represented a new moral advance in the conduct of international diplomacy. He cited the anti-nuclear clause in the treaty as an example of Argentine participation positively influencing the course of international diplomacy and pushing the Cold War in the direction of disarmament and reconciliation.¹² Argentina could not be expected to assert such an influence, he suggested, if it remained outside the newly created Antarctic Treaty System. Such arguments sought to put a positive spin on what most officials in his government viewed as the inevitability of Argentine participation in such a system. Most of these officials were political realists and they realized that the weight of international opinion was, by this stage, firmly opposed to the exercise of national sovereignty claims in Antarctica.

Despite the best efforts of the President, the passage of the Antarctic Treaty through the Chamber of Deputies in the Argentine Congress remained difficult. The

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Potash, *The army & politics in Argentina*.

¹² This argument is also made particularly forcefully in Scilingo, *El Tratado antártico; defensa de la soberanía y la proscripción nuclear*.

debate took place in April 1961, and it was attended by the Ministers of Foreign Relations and Defense as well as the heads of the armed forces. It divided along party lines, with the opposition UCRP stridently opposed to the ratification of the treaty. Borrowing from the arguments of Candiotti and others, the opposition deputies argued that ratification would imply an immediate internationalization of the Antarctic continent and that this represented a “sell out” of Argentine territory. The opposition also attacked members of the armed forces for supporting the treaty. Deputies from Frondizi’s own party reiterated the President’s own arguments in making the case that ratification was a defense, and even a partial recognition, of Argentina’s rights rather than a renunciation. In the end, the ratification bill passed Congress due to the ruling party’s majority.

In Chile, the ratification process was contested in a similar fashion.¹³ Critics of the Treaty argued that it represented a sell-out of Chilean national rights. One of the leading opponents to ratification was General Cañas Montalva, one of the country’s leading geopolitical theorists, but by this stage he enjoyed relatively little influence within the government. The geopolitical establishment more generally rejected the Antarctic Treaty in principle, but there was sufficient political realism to understand that this was not the worst possible political outcome for Chilean Antarctic interests. The government of President Alessandri had vested relatively little in Antarctica, and the President himself had no particular fondness for Antarctica. Perhaps the most significant question for Chilean legislators was whether or not Argentina would ratify the Treaty. If the Argentines were not going to incorporate the provisions of the Antarctic Treaty into national law, then the

¹³ Pinochet de la Barra, *Medio siglo de recuerdos antárticos: memorias*.

Chileans did not want to set a bad precedent by ratifying it themselves. Consequently, the Chilean ratification process closely followed that of Argentina. Eventually, the two South American governments agreed to ratify the Treaty on the same day in order to avoid any problems.

On 23 June 1961, Argentina, Chile, and Australia became the final three countries to ratify the Antarctic Treaty, thereby bringing its provisions into effect. The Australians had also dragged their feet over ratification due to fears, similar to those in South America, that the Treaty represented a surrender of national interests in Antarctica to the advantage of the Soviet Union. The unanimous ratification of the Antarctic Treaty represented quite a remarkable coming together of divergent political interests. Without the participation of Argentina and Chile, the limited internationalization of Antarctica would probably have been impossible. The two South American nations ultimately deemed it politically expedient to give up on their once vehement anti-imperialism in favor of membership of an “exclusive club.” Their “collaboration” helped to legitimate the reformulation of imperial influence into the Antarctic Treaty System, and diminished the possibility of a united “Third World” challenge to this newly created Frozen Empire. This attitude is perhaps best understood as a continuation of the “imperial” element of Argentine and Chilean claims to Antarctica.

FROM IMPERIALISM TO GLOBALIZATION

By the terms of the Antarctic Treaty, the immediate exercise of Antarctic sovereignty passed from individual nation states to an international treaty system. This marked a significant development in the history of Antarctica. From a British

perspective in particular, the signature and ratification of the Antarctic Treaty might be seen as a somewhat anomalous form of decolonization. Rather than handing colonial authority to a national government, as was happening at the same time throughout the European colonial empires, the seven claimant nations handed power to an international treaty system, in which they retained significant political influence. From a South American perspective, this formulation is more problematic since the outcome that both Argentines and Chileans most desired would have been universally accepted international recognition for their national claims to Antarctic sovereignty. Whether or not the Antarctic Treaty is classified as treaty of decolonization is largely a semantic question, but it undoubtedly created an innovative and unique international system.

Following the ratification of the Antarctic Treaty, it could be argued that Antarctica became the world's first "globalized continent" since it came to be governed by an international treaty system rather than by individual nation states. Historical studies of globalization offer one of the most useful ways of thinking about the changes and continuities brought about by the Antarctic Treaty of 1959.¹⁴ Globalization is a comparatively recent term, and this is not how the people at the time understood the creation of the Antarctic Treaty System. Scholars of globalization tend to define the term in two ways.¹⁵ Firstly, and least problematically, globalization is viewed as a quantitative change: "a process that transforms economic, political, social, and cultural relationships, across countries,

¹⁴ The historiography of globalization draws upon the vast and expanding social science literature on the subject. For an early example of historical, as opposed to social-science, interpretations of globalization see Bruce Mazlish and Ralph Buultjens, *Conceptualizing global history*, Global history (Boulder, 1993).

¹⁵ For a useful discussion of the definitions of globalization, see A. G. Hopkins, *Globalization in world history* (New York, 2002).

regions and continents by spreading them more broadly, making them more intense and increasing their velocity.”¹⁶ Secondly, and more problematically, globalization can be defined as instituting qualitative changes in these global processes. Depending on the chosen definition, it is possible to make a case for various “periods of globalization” when these changes have taken place. The strongest chronological case is made for a contemporary period of globalization, in the present and recent past, which is qualitatively distinct from earlier periods of international exchange.¹⁷ Whether or not there have been earlier periods of globalization, it is this recent period of “post-colonial” globalization that most concerns scholars of Antarctica, since the Antarctic Treaty System can be seen as part of the global processes taking place at this time. Both quantitative and qualitative definitions of the term can be helpful for thinking about the nature of the Antarctic Treaty System, and its relationship to the imperial and national sovereignty claims that preceded it. Did the Antarctic Treaty System represent something entirely new, or was it merely an acceleration of existing processes? In posing this question, the Antarctic Treaty System can serve as a case study – albeit it a quite unique case study – of contemporary, post-colonial globalization.

The Antarctic Treaty System exemplifies many of the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in contemporary globalization.¹⁸ As a limited international regime, the Treaty System was at the same time “above the nation” and dependent upon individual nation states. Its creation saw its signatories suspend many of their political rights, but at the same time it reformulated and retained much of their

¹⁶ Ibid. 16.

¹⁷ The exclusive association of globalization with the contemporary era has been challenged by a number of historians

¹⁸ For a discussion of these contradictions, see Hopkins, *Globalization in world history*.

political influence. While loudly championing its own idealism, the Antarctic Treaty created a vastly unequal relationship between those countries on the inside of the exclusive club, and those left on the outside. All of these contradictions and paradoxes could be applied to the idea of contemporary globalization more generally, which has seen the power of nation states both eroded and enhanced, and imperialism both brought to an end and reformulated.

The Antarctic Treaty established one of the world's most successful and long-lasting international systems of territorial government. Its members generally meet once a year in a different city around the world to discuss and agree upon collective policies for the administration of Antarctica. To its great credit, the Antarctic Treaty System has kept human activity in the Southern Continent peaceful: the Hope Bay incident of 1952 remains the only time that shots have been fired in anger. The anti-nuclear provisions within the Antarctic Treaty acted as a model and a precedent for wider scale nuclear test ban treaties during the Cold War, and peaceful scientific relations in Antarctica more generally helped to foster East-West understanding. Several scholars have proposed the Antarctic Treaty System as a model for future global government.¹⁹ Antarctica has also been suggested as an analogy for the internationalization of space.²⁰

Despite its successes, the exclusionary nature of the Antarctic Treaty System has not gone unnoticed. During the 1980s, Malaysia led a "Third World" assault on the "exclusive club" that governed Antarctica.²¹ This was a period when there was, once again, a great deal of speculation about the economic worth of Antarctica – the

¹⁹ Berkman, *Science into policy: global lessons from Antarctica*.

²⁰ Philip C. Jessup and Howard Jack Taubenfeld, *Controls for outer space and the Antarctic analogy*, Columbia University studies in international organization (New York, 1959).

²¹ Beck, *The international politics of Antarctica*. 284-297.

idea of Antarctica as a “Frozen *El Dorado*” seemed to be both enduring and cyclical. The members of the Antarctic Treaty System were trying to negotiate a minerals regime to facilitate and regulate economic prospecting and resource extraction in Antarctica. In many ways the Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, picked up where Krishna Menon and the Indians had left off with their attempts to raise the Antarctic question in the United Nations during the late 1950s. By the 1980s, however, India had established a “substantial scientific interest” in Antarctica and become a consultative member of the Antarctic Treaty System in the hope of winning its slice of any economic dividend. Unable to create a powerful alliance, the Malaysians faced an uphill struggle in their campaign against the Antarctic Treaty System, and ultimately failed to win any major concessions. But the Malaysian criticisms did play some part in the breakdown over the negotiation of a “minerals regime” for Antarctica, and its replacement with the Madrid Environmental Protocol of 1991, which made Antarctica the most protected environment in the world.

Historical studies of globalization offer a particularly promising way to look at the history of Antarctica following the signature of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959. By studying the twenty-year period leading up to the limited internationalization of Antarctica, this dissertation provides an excellent starting point for such an analysis. It has shown that there was nothing coincidental about the retention of the signatories’ political influence into the Antarctic Treaty System. Rather, this was the result of deliberate policy on the part of Britain, the United States, and others: the globalization of Antarctica was skewed in favor of its member’s interests from the very beginning. Closely connected to this retention of interest, studies of globalization also offers an excellent framework for the examination of the continued

importance of science and the environment – two categories that are often thought to be “above the nation” – within the Antarctic Treaty System.

A CONTINENT FOR SCIENCE

This dissertation has suggested that Antarctica provides an excellent location for “doing environmental history” and investigating the dynamic interaction of human activity, human understanding, and the natural environment. By the terms of the 1959 Treaty, Antarctica became a “continent for science.”²² Article II decreed:

Freedom of scientific investigation in Antarctica and cooperation toward that end, as applied during the International Geophysical Year, shall continue, subject to the provisions of the present Treaty.²³

This scientific freedom – with its tacit assumption of being “for the good of humanity” – gave a moral authority to the Antarctic Treaty System.²⁴ Such an assumption was not so very different from the British Empire’s claim to environmental authority, or from the environmental nationalism of Argentina and Chile.

Science provides the principal mechanism for the retention of the signatories’ political influence within the Antarctic Treaty System. As British and North American officials had hoped, the requirement for a country to be conducting

²² Lewis, *A continent for science; the Antarctic adventure*.

²³ See Appendix.

²⁴ In justifying Britain’s claims to the Falkland Islands Dependencies, Sir Miles Clifford, the Governor of the Falkland Islands, declared that Britain had asserted its sovereignty in order to regulate the whaling industry, “for the good of humanity.” Miles Clifford: “Broadcast Address by His Excellency the Governor, 22 February 1948. RHL, MISS. Brit Emp.s 517 4/1 “Falkland Islands 1946-1957: Clifford.”

“substantial scientific research” in Antarctica in order to have a seat at the political table functioned as a powerful barrier to entry, and had the desired outcome of keeping potential “trouble makers” firmly on the outside. It was no coincidence that Britain, together with the United States and the Soviet Union, continued to dominate the scientific institutions that came to exercise an unprecedented authority in governing Antarctica. The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), established in 1958 as a way to continue the scientific co-operation of the IGY, has its international headquarters at the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, England.²⁵ It was from here that Brian Roberts and others plotted Britain’s Antarctic strategy over the course of the sovereignty dispute. In the first twenty years of the Antarctic Treaty System, the recommendations of SCAR had a tremendous and virtually uncontested influence on the resolutions passed by the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings.²⁶ The British Antarctic Survey, the Instituto Antártico Argentino, and Instituto Antártico Chileno, continue to serve political purposes and exercise a significant influence on contemporary Antarctic policy making.²⁷

During the Antarctic sovereignty dispute, changing perceptions of the Antarctic environment – and in the case of declining whale populations, changes in the environment itself – had important political consequences. In a sense, developments in Antarctic science itself acted against exclusive claims to imperial and national sovereignty. The sciences upon which the British established their

²⁵ Discussion of the relationship between the Antarctic Treaty and SCAR began as early as 13 October 1958 in a US-Australian discussion. *FRUS* 1958-60. Volume 2. United Nations and General International Matters. 1958-60. 277. Memorandum of a Conversation, Department of State, Washington, October 13, 1958.

²⁶ See the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat’s historical database: <http://reco.ats.aq/ats.reco/index.aspx?lang=e> (Accessed on 24 March 2008).

²⁷ In all the first two cases these are institutions that are directly descended from the era of the sovereignty dispute. The Chilean Antarctic Institute was not founded until 1964.

“environmental authority” tended to conceive of the world as a relatively stable place. The new paradigm of geophysics, however, was founded upon a fundamentally dynamic and unstable view of the world. This new paradigm was less amenable to imperial exploitation in the traditional sense, since it offered little sense of permanence, and less possibility of control. The International Geophysical Year of 1957-58, for example, revealed that the geological continuity between the Andes mountains and the Antarctic Peninsula – used by both Argentina and Chile as a marker of their sovereignty – was in fact a lot more complicated than geologists had traditionally suggested. But this changing scientific paradigm did not imply an end to the connection between science and politics in Antarctica. Indeed, just as South American nationalists had once argued that the Antarctic environment itself made a case for Argentine and Chilean sovereignty, proponents of the Antarctic Treaty System now argue that the “supranational” nature of the Antarctic environment makes a case for the international government of Antarctica, themselves appropriating the Antarctic environment to suit their political case.²⁸

Importantly, the enduring hegemony of Antarctic science stems from the fact it seems to offer the best way of understanding the Antarctic environment.²⁹ During the active period of the sovereignty dispute, an improved scientific understanding of the continent gave the countries competing for Antarctic sovereignty practical advantages in the contest for sovereignty. Improved weather forecasting, for example, could prevent a ship from becoming caught in a storm or stuck in the pack ice with embarrassing, or even tragic, consequences. Claims to environmental

²⁸ Greenpeace and other environmental organizations also use the environment itself to make a case for a “World Park” in Antarctica. See, Griffiths, *Slicing the silence: voyaging to Antarctica*.

²⁹ Fogg, *A history of Antarctic science*.

authority were not completely “constructed” and scientific knowledge corresponded in a powerful fashion to the reality of the Antarctic environment. Today’s fears of global warming (a particularly globalized environmental problem) make scientific knowledge about the Antarctic environment a particularly pressing issue. It was during the IGY that scientists started to take systematic measurements of the Carbon Dioxide content of the atmosphere. These measurements have created continuous sets of data that have demonstrated an anthropogenic increase in greenhouse gases. Changes in the earth’s climate threaten to have a significant impact upon Antarctica. In turn, environmental changes in Antarctica, especially the collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, could lead to devastating environmental consequences for people throughout the world, irrespective of national boundaries. Scientific understanding of the Antarctica’s environmental reality is therefore tremendously important.

By the terms of the Madrid Protocol of 1991, the Antarctic continent became the most protected environment in the world. The negotiation of the protocol represented an attempt to maintain Antarctica as a pristine wilderness.³⁰ It put an end to discussion of the exploitation of minerals in Antarctica (at least in the medium term), it prohibited the importation of any non-native species (with the exception of people), and it prohibited the extraction of any Antarctic material. Through the imposition of “sites of special scientific interest” the Protocol placed strict limits on places that can and cannot be visited by non-scientists. Above all, the Environmental Protocol confirms the enduring hegemony of science and scientists in Antarctica.

³⁰ In the last decade or so, the idea of wilderness has been challenged by a number of environmental historians. See for example, William Cronon, *Uncommon ground: rethinking the human place in nature* (New York, 1996). Generally, this challenge has yet to reach Antarctica.

Due to the relative simplicity of its human-nature-culture interactions, the southern continent starkly epitomizes the fundamental tension between benign environmental protection and less benign environmental control. This dissertation contributes to this debate by showing that on-going claims to environmental authority in Antarctica have a direct connection to the continent's imperial past: for better or for worse, the Antarctic Treaty System is today's Frozen Empire.

Appendix: Official Text of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty

The Governments of Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, the French Republic, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, the Union of South Africa, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America,

Recognizing that it is in the interest of all mankind that Antarctica shall continue for ever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and shall not become the scene or object of international discord;

Acknowledging the substantial contributions to scientific knowledge resulting from international cooperation in scientific investigation in Antarctica;

Convinced that the establishment of a firm foundation for the continuation and development of such cooperation on the basis of freedom of scientific investigation in Antarctica as applied during the International Geophysical Year accords with the interests of science and the progress of all mankind;

Convinced also that a treaty ensuring the use of Antarctica for peaceful purposes only and the continuance of international harmony in Antarctica will further the purposes and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations;

Have agreed as follows:

Article I

1. Antarctica shall be used for peaceful purposes only. There shall be prohibited, inter alia, any measure of a military nature, such as the establishment of

military bases and fortifications, the carrying out of military manoeuvres, as well as the testing of any type of weapon.

2. The present Treaty shall not prevent the use of military personnel or equipment for scientific research or for any other peaceful purpose.

Article II

Freedom of scientific investigation in Antarctica and cooperation toward that end, as applied during the International Geophysical Year, shall continue, subject to the provisions of the present Treaty.

Article III

1. In order to promote international cooperation in scientific investigation in Antarctica, as provided for in Article II of the present Treaty, the Contracting Parties agree that, to the greatest extent feasible and practicable:

a. information regarding plans for scientific programs in Antarctica shall be exchanged to permit maximum economy of and efficiency of operations;

b. scientific personnel shall be exchanged in Antarctica between expeditions and stations;

c. scientific observations and results from Antarctica shall be exchanged and made freely available.

2. In implementing this Article, every encouragement shall be given to the establishment of cooperative working relations with those Specialized Agencies of

the United Nations and other technical organizations having a scientific or technical interest in Antarctica.

Article IV

1. Nothing contained in the present Treaty shall be interpreted as:

a. a renunciation by any Contracting Party of previously asserted rights of or claims to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica;

b. a renunciation or diminution by any Contracting Party of any basis of claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica which it may have whether as a result of its activities or those of its nationals in Antarctica, or otherwise;

c. prejudicing the position of any Contracting Party as regards its recognition or non-recognition of any other State's rights of or claim or basis of claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica.

2. No acts or activities taking place while the present Treaty is in force shall constitute a basis for asserting, supporting or denying a claim to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica or create any rights of sovereignty in Antarctica. No new claim, or enlargement of an existing claim, to territorial sovereignty in Antarctica shall be asserted while the present Treaty is in force.

Article V

1. Any nuclear explosions in Antarctica and the disposal there of radioactive waste material shall be prohibited.

2. In the event of the conclusion of international agreements concerning the use of nuclear energy, including nuclear explosions and the disposal of radioactive waste material, to which all of the Contracting Parties whose representatives are entitled to participate in the meetings provided for under Article IX are parties, the rules established under such agreements shall apply in Antarctica.

Article VI

The provisions of the present Treaty shall apply to the area south of 60° South Latitude, including all ice shelves, but nothing in the present Treaty shall prejudice or in any way affect the rights, or the exercise of the rights, of any State under international law with regard to the high seas within that area.

Article VII

1. In order to promote the objectives and ensure the observance of the provisions of the present Treaty, each Contracting Party whose representatives are entitled to participate in the meetings referred to in Article IX of the Treaty shall have the right to designate observers to carry out any inspection provided for by the present Article. Observers shall be nationals of the Contracting Parties which designate them. The names of observers shall be communicated to every other Contracting Party having the right to designate observers, and like notice shall be given of the termination of their appointment.

2. Each observer designated in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article shall have complete freedom of access at any time to any or all areas of Antarctica.

3. All areas of Antarctica, including all stations, installations and equipment within those areas, and all ships and aircraft at points of discharging or embarking cargoes or personnel in Antarctica, shall be open at all times to inspection by any observers designated in accordance with paragraph 1 of this Article.

4. Aerial observation may be carried out at any time over any or all areas of Antarctica by any of the Contracting Parties having the right to designate observers.

5. Each Contracting Party shall, at the time when the present Treaty enters into force for it, inform the other Contracting Parties, and thereafter shall give them notice in advance, of

a. all expeditions to and within Antarctica, on the part of its ships or nationals, and all expeditions to Antarctica organized in or proceeding from its territory;

b. all stations in Antarctica occupied by its nationals; and

c. any military personnel or equipment intended to be introduced by it into Antarctica subject to the conditions prescribed in paragraph 2 of Article I of the present Treaty.

Article VIII

1. In order to facilitate the exercise of their functions under the present Treaty, and without prejudice to the respective positions of the Contracting Parties relating to jurisdiction over all other persons in Antarctica, observers designated under paragraph 1 of Article VII and scientific personnel exchanged under subparagraph 1(b) of Article III of the Treaty, and members of the staffs accompanying any such persons, shall be subject only to the jurisdiction of the Contracting Party of which they are nationals in respect of all acts or omissions occurring while they are in Antarctica for the purpose of exercising their functions.

2. Without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article, and pending the adoption of measures in pursuance of subparagraph 1(e) of Article IX, the Contracting Parties concerned in any case of dispute with regard to the exercise of jurisdiction in Antarctica shall immediately consult together with a view to reaching a mutually acceptable solution.

Article IX

1. Representatives of the Contracting Parties named in the preamble to the present Treaty shall meet at the City of Canberra within two months after the date of entry into force of the Treaty, and thereafter at suitable intervals and places, for the purpose of exchanging information, consulting together on matters of common interest pertaining to Antarctica, and formulating and considering, and recommending to their Governments, measures in furtherance of the principles and objectives of the Treaty, including measures regarding:

a. use of Antarctica for peaceful purposes only;

- b. facilitation of scientific research in Antarctica;
- c. facilitation of international scientific cooperation in Antarctica;
- d. facilitation of the exercise of the rights of inspection provided for in Article VII of the Treaty;
- e. questions relating to the exercise of jurisdiction in Antarctica;
- f. preservation and conservation of living resources in Antarctica.

2. Each Contracting Party which has become a party to the present Treaty by accession under Article XIII shall be entitled to appoint representatives to participate in the meetings referred to in paragraph 1 of the present Article, during such times as that Contracting Party demonstrates its interest in Antarctica by conducting substantial research activity there, such as the establishment of a scientific station or the despatch of a scientific expedition.

3. Reports from the observers referred to in Article VII of the present Treaty shall be transmitted to the representatives of the Contracting Parties participating in the meetings referred to in paragraph 1 of the present Article.

4. The measures referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall become effective when approved by all the Contracting Parties whose representatives were entitled to participate in the meetings held to consider those measures.

5. Any or all of the rights established in the present Treaty may be exercised as from the date of entry into force of the Treaty whether or not any measures

facilitating the exercise of such rights have been proposed, considered or approved as provided in this Article.

Article X

Each of the Contracting Parties undertakes to exert appropriate efforts, consistent with the Charter of the United Nations, to the end that no one engages in any activity in Antarctica contrary to the principles or purposes of the present Treaty.

Article XI

1. If any dispute arises between two or more of the Contracting Parties concerning the interpretation or application of the present Treaty, those Contracting Parties shall consult among themselves with a view to having the dispute resolved by negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement or other peaceful means of their own choice.

2. Any dispute of this character not so resolved shall, with the consent, in each case, of all parties to the dispute, be referred to the International Court of Justice for settlement; but failure to reach agreement on reference to the International Court shall not absolve parties to the dispute from the responsibility of continuing to seek to resolve it by any of the various peaceful means referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.

Article XII

1. a. The present Treaty may be modified or amended at any time by unanimous agreement of the Contracting Parties whose representatives are entitled to

participate in the meetings provided for under Article IX. Any such modification or amendment shall enter into force when the depositary Government has received notice from all such Contracting Parties that they have ratified it.

b. Such modification or amendment shall thereafter enter into force as to any other Contracting Party when notice of ratification by it has been received by the depositary Government. Any such Contracting Party from which no notice of ratification is received within a period of two years from the date of entry into force of the modification or amendment in accordance with the provision of subparagraph 1(a) of this Article shall be deemed to have withdrawn from the present Treaty on the date of the expiration of such period.

2. a. If after the expiration of thirty years from the date of entry into force of the present Treaty, any of the Contracting Parties whose representatives are entitled to participate in the meetings provided for under Article IX so requests by a communication addressed to the depositary Government, a Conference of all the Contracting Parties shall be held as soon as practicable to review the operation of the Treaty.

b. Any modification or amendment to the present Treaty which is approved at such a Conference by a majority of the Contracting Parties there represented, including a majority of those whose representatives are entitled to participate in the meetings provided for under Article IX, shall be communicated by the depositary Government to all Contracting Parties immediately after the termination of the Conference and shall enter into force in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1 of the present Article

c. If any such modification or amendment has not entered into force in accordance with the provisions of subparagraph 1(a) of this Article within a period of

two years after the date of its communication to all the Contracting Parties, any Contracting Party may at any time after the expiration of that period give notice to the depositary Government of its withdrawal from the present Treaty; and such withdrawal shall take effect two years after the receipt of the notice by the depositary Government.

Article XIII

1. The present Treaty shall be subject to ratification by the signatory States. It shall be open for accession by any State which is a Member of the United Nations, or by any other State which may be invited to accede to the Treaty with the consent of all the Contracting Parties whose representatives are entitled to participate in the meetings provided for under Article IX of the Treaty.

2. Ratification of or accession to the present Treaty shall be effected by each State in accordance with its constitutional processes.

3. Instruments of ratification and instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Government of the United States of America, hereby designated as the depositary Government.

4. The depositary Government shall inform all signatory and acceding States of the date of each deposit of an instrument of ratification or accession, and the date of entry into force of the Treaty and of any modification or amendment thereto.

5. Upon the deposit of instruments of ratification by all the signatory States, the present Treaty shall enter into force for those States and for States which have deposited instruments of accession. Thereafter the Treaty shall enter into force for any acceding State upon the deposit of its instruments of accession.

6. The present Treaty shall be registered by the depositary Government pursuant to Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Article XIV

The present Treaty, done in the English, French, Russian and Spanish languages, each version being equally authentic, shall be deposited in the archives of the Government of the United States of America, which shall transmit duly certified copies thereof to the Governments of the signatory and acceding States.

The Antarctic Treaty

signed in Washington on 1 December 1959

entered into force on 23 June 1961

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