

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the motives underlying the Soviet interest in the Antarctic prior to the Antarctic Treaty. It has done so through a framework of analysis provided by Bertram, who identified five chief motives for a state's Antarctic involvement, especially in the immediate post World War II period: the adventurous; the economic; the scientific; the political; and the strategic. Bertram's analysis, although at first glance simplistic, is nonetheless a logical and helpful to understand the interests that countries displayed towards the Antarctic in the post war period. Bertram's motives provided a lens through which Soviet Antarctic endeavours can be examined. A chronological examination of Soviet activities in the Antarctic undertaken in this thesis indicates that all five motives played a role in the Soviet desire to become active in the Antarctic and drove Soviet Antarctic policy. In the particular case of the USSR, the motives constantly fluctuated in relative importance, although, as the thesis makes clear, the predominant one was always the political imperative to gain an ongoing voice in any international decision about a regime for the Antarctic.

The thesis has argued that the USSR had a consistent, long-term policy which gradually intensified and expanded its presence in the South Polar region. The fortuitous acquisition of the Antarctic whaling flotilla, which was handed to the USSR by the Allied Tripartite Commission as war reparations, was the beginning of the Soviet presence in the Antarctic. The Commission recognized that an Antarctic whaling flotilla would be exploited in a manner compatible with its designation. As it turned out, the whaling flotilla's activities were not limited to whaling. One of the flotilla's ships was always given over to a scientific group, with scientists from the All-Union Research Institute of Fishery and Oceanography and the State Oceanographic Institute on board conducting systematic research of the climate, flora, fauna, hydrology and ice. Commencement of these activities in the Southern Ocean directly led to the USSR becoming a signatory of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, which bestowed further legitimacy on a continuing Soviet presence in the Antarctic. Successful operations would furnish the war ravaged USSR with more than increased scientific understanding of the South Polar region and the economic benefits of whale oil, meat and other products of the whaling industry. Its fortuitous insinuation of its presence into the region would

potentially add a greater weight to Soviet attempts to participate in any future negotiations in any arrangements for an international regime for the Antarctic, which was its underlying political motivation.

The thesis demonstrates that from the time of its reaction to the 1948 American proposal for a solution of the 'Antarctic Problem' that attempted to exclude the USSR, the latter has always insisted on a wider international solution to the problem, as outlined in its Memorandum of 7 June 1950. From that time on, the USSR has consistently adhered to this position. It has proactively participated in all major international initiatives involving the Antarctic, such as the IGY, SCAR and IGC. This participation provided it with internationally justifiable opportunities to expand and intensify its long term physical presence on the Antarctic continent, even in areas claimed by other countries, thereby adding greater weight to its opinions in formulating international Antarctic policy. The concurrent Soviet policy of not recognizing any claims and not restricting itself to any specific area of the continent by making a claim gave the USSR the freedom to occupy any location on which it had the desire and the capability to build a base. This policy, however, did not exclude the possibility of a Soviet Antarctic claim. In fact, the Note of the USSR government to the US of 2 June 1958 unambiguously stated that '[t]he Soviet Union reserves all rights based on the discoveries and explorations by Russian navigators and scientists, including the right to present appropriate territorial claims on the Antarctic.'⁵⁷⁶

Soviet Antarctic activities were a matter of concern for countries that had already proclaimed sovereignty over Antarctic territory. Australia, in particular, found itself in a difficult position especially immediately prior to and during the IGY. The USSR intended to establish a primary coastal base on Antarctic territory claimed by Australia, with which it had recently broken diplomatic relations. The latter was most unenthusiastic about the prospect of a Soviet base on the Australian Antarctic Territory, but was unable to voice disapproval without earning international opprobrium for its lack of grace in supporting a fellow IGY participant.

⁵⁷⁶ USSR 1958. Soviet note of 2 June 1958 to the United States accepting the United States invitation to attend an international conference on Antarctica. In: Bush, W. 1982. Antarctica and International Law. A Collection of inter-state and National Documents, vol 3. London-Rome-New York: Ocean Publications Inc.: 213.

Not only was it unable to voice disapproval, it was placed in the unenviable position of issuing a half-hearted invitation to the Soviet expedition. A further aggravation to Australian sensitivities was the Soviet decision to name their base *Mirny* (peaceful), in honour of one of Bellingshausen's sloops, which underscored both the Soviet claim to priority of discovery in Antarctica and the peaceful purpose of the Soviet expedition. It comes as no surprise that the Australians officially refused to call the base by name, preferring to refer to it simply as the 'Russian scientific camp in the Australian Antarctic Territory'. Australian lack of enthusiasm for the Soviet presence did not deter the latter from pursuing their course of politically symbolic 'good will visits' to the Australian mainland and to the neighboring New Zealand. In this time of Cold War tensions and unresolved Antarctic claims, the Australian and New Zealand governments were intensely wary of Soviet intentions and barely tolerated these visits by Soviet expeditions. The Soviet scientists, however, played an important role in overcoming political differences through their efforts at international cooperation to fulfil the scientific objectives of the IGY and a number of them developed lasting working relationships with Australian and New Zealand scientists and expedition members.

Initially, the Soviet choice of potential sites for establishing their IGY observatories was governed by the sites' political symbolism and scientific significance. Although the Soviets' first preference was to build a base on the symbolically prestigious geographic South Pole, this option was appropriated by the United States. The alternative option for the Soviets to build on two sites, the Pole of Inaccessibility and the South Geomagnetic Pole, however, provided them with both a significant challenge and the opportunity to earn national prestige by accomplishing their aims in the most difficult and remote locations, a task most observers considered unachievable. The Soviets believed that 'achieving the unachievable' would reinforce the world wide recognition of the leading role of their researchers in Antarctic exploration and, as an added benefit, reinforce any legal rights that may accrue from such exploration.⁵⁷⁷ These rights would rest not just on discovery, but on extensive exploratory, scientific and similar activities. In time, the Soviets intended to establish bases which spread from the initial bases in the Australian sector to all

⁵⁷⁷ Lebedev, V. 1960. Spravka o podgotovke atlasa Antarktiki, 8 Avgusta [Memorandum regarding the preparation of an Antarctic Atlas, 8 August 1960]. Moscow: Rossiiskiy Gosudarstvenniy Archiv Ekonomiki (Russian State Economics Archives) File 9570, op 2, ed hr 2604.

other parts of the continent. Western observers considered that this was done with a view to building up a legal basis for either a possible future territorial claim.

Although Soviet policy was overwhelmingly dictated by the political motive, Bertram contends that there are scientists who appreciate that governments will provide funds for science even though they may not be motivated by science and that there are politicians who fully recognize that political ends may be achieved under a scientific cloak. This thesis shows that the interaction between political and scientific interests helped mould Soviet Antarctic policy during the final months of the IGY when the USSR was planning its post IGY Antarctic programmes, although the two perspectives did not always correspond. The scientists attempted to resist reductions in science funding, whereas the politicians would have liked to obtain maximum political advantage for minimum financial outlay. Compromises were made on both sides, with national prestige being an area where the scientists and the politicians appeared to be in full agreement.

Political considerations and scientific endeavour were closely intertwined with the adventurous motive - curiosity, courage, excitement, the search for knowledge, the desire to be first and the desire to help one's nation. The exploits of Soviet nationals in the Antarctic were a continuation of the accomplishments of the nation's Arctic polar explorers, and the 'myth spun out of them became an important, even central, part of the socialist-realist worldview.'⁵⁷⁸ This sentiment was clearly illustrated in the case of the whaling flotilla by the reception that it received on returning from the Antarctic: '[a]ll the ships in port struck up a deafening chorus of welcoming blasts. The piers, the embankment, the Shevchenko Park, and the adjacent streets as far as the eye could see were thronged - a great mass of people and flowers.'⁵⁷⁹

As for the Soviet Antarctic expeditions, 250 distinguished participants of the first five Soviet Antarctic expeditions 'were rewarded for their services in the scientific investigations of the Antarctic and for courage shown there' at a Kremlin

⁵⁷⁸ McCannon, J. 1998. *Red Arctic. Polar Exploration and the Myth of the North in the Soviet Union, 1932-1939*. N.Y: Oxford University Press: 82.

⁵⁷⁹ Solyanik, A. 1956. *Cruising in the Antarctic. An account of the seventh cruise of the Slava whaling Flotilla*. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House: 76.

ceremony on 21st August 1961 by the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Leonid Brezhnev.⁵⁸⁰ The timing of the decision to honour these distinguished members of the expeditions was an eloquent sign that all the interconnected motives driving Soviet interest in the Antarctic had achieved the ultimate political goal: the full-blown participation of the USSR in negotiating an international settlement of the Antarctic problem. Symbolically, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR made its decision on precisely the day that all its Antarctic endeavours culminated in a new international Antarctic regime - the 23 June 1961, the day that the Antarctic Treaty came into force.

This thesis has described the practical steps taken by the Soviets to get to the table to negotiate the Antarctic Treaty. It ends at the beginning of a long and complex process fraught with difficulties for all of the twelve states that participated in these negotiations. Although the archives of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 'is not in possession of material' that can be accessed regarding the Antarctic Treaty negotiations and the national strategies that were pursued by the USSR to expand its Antarctic interests, other archives such as the Russian State Archives of Socio – Political History in Moscow (former Central Party Archive) may provide a fertile field for further study.

⁵⁸⁰ Brezhnev, L. and M. Georgadze. 1961. Ukaz Prezidiuma Verhovnogo Soveta SSSR [Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 23 June 1961. *Informatsionnyy Bulletin Sovetskoi Antarkticheskoi Expeditsii* [Information bulletin of the Soviet Antarctic expedition] 29: 5.

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