

**Out in the Cold: Science and the  
Environment in South Africa's  
Involvement in the sub-Antarctic and  
Antarctic in the Twentieth Century**

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## Declaration

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## Abstract

This study addresses a little-known but important part of South Africa's history: its involvement with the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic in the twentieth century. It has a three-fold approach. Firstly, it provides insight into the motives driving South Africa's investment in the region, from the first call for a South African Antarctic expedition in 1919 to the post-apartheid recommitment to the South African Antarctic Programme. Interrogating of the reasons behind South Africa's activities in this region – including those that failed –throws into relief broader issues about how and where South Africa saw itself in the geopolitical order. As such, this dissertation is situated within a body of Antarctic scholarship that seeks to subvert the prevailing homogenising narrative of the continent as simply the preserve of scientists and heroes. In particular, it investigates how tropes of imperialism and nationalism functioned in these remote corners of the world. Secondly, this dissertation investigates how changing perceptions of the extreme environment of Antarctica, and specifically the Prince Edward Islands, can add to our understanding of environmental history. It also shows how the values projected onto and invested in the environment as 'nature' changed over time. Thirdly, it takes into account the humans that were South Africa's presence in the region and how the underlying patterns in the fabric of South African society, including race and gender, crystalized on the Antarctic continent.

## Opsomming

Hierdie studie is gerig op 'n minder bekende, maar belangrike aspek van Suid-Afrika se geskiedenis: die land se betrokkenheid by die sub-Antarktiese gebied en Antarktika in die twintigste eeu. Die studie volg van 'n drie-ledige benadering. Eerstens, verskaf dit insig in die dryfvere agter Suid-Afrika se investering in die streek – vanaf die eerste beroep op 'n Suid-Afrikaanse Antarktiese ekspedisie in 1919, tot die post-apartheid regering se herverbintenis tot die Suid-Afrikaanse Antarktiese program. Die ondersoek na die redes vir Suid-Afrika se aktiwiteite in die streek – insluitend dié wat misluk het – bring breër kwessies oor Suid-Afrika se selfbeskouing in die wêreld se geopolitieke orde, na vore. Hierdie studie word binne 'n kritiese raamwerk van navorsing oor Antarktika geplaas. Dié raamwerk streef daarna om die oorheersende homogene beeld van die kontinent as die eksklusiewe grondgebied van wetenskaplikes en helde, onder die soeklig te stel. In die besonder stel dit ondersoek in na hoe imperialisme en nasionalisme in hierdie verafgeleë uithoeke van die aarde versinnebeeld is. Tweedens, ondersoek hierdie studie hoe veranderende persepsies van Antarktika - en veral die Prins Edward eilande - se uiterste omgewing tot ons begrip van omgewingsgeskiedenis kan bydra. Dit dui ook aan die mate waartoe bestaande waardes wat op die omgewing as 'natuur' geprojekteer en gevestig is, mettertyd verander het. Die derde benadering neem die mense wat Suid-Afrika se teenwoordigheid verpersoonlik het in aanmerking - en hoe die onderliggende patrone in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing, insluitend ras en geslag, op die Antarktiese kontinent uitgekristalliseer het.

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Three days out south on the *SA Agulhas* I received the news that the building housing the Department of History had burned down. It has not been an easy year for the Department but they remained very supportive. My friends-and-colleagues-in-exile, Chet Fransch, Sarah Duff and Schalk van der Merwe were always ready with good humour, good advice, ready answers and most importantly, excellent coffee!

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## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ALP	- Antarctic Legacy Project
ANC	- African National Congress
ASOC	- Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition
ATCM	- Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings
ATCP	- Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties
ATS	- Antarctic Treaty System
BANZARE	- British-Australian-New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition
BAS	- British Antarctic Survey
BIOMASS	- Biological Investigation of Marine Antarctic Systems and Stocks
CCAMLR	- Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
CCAS	- Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals
CGASI	- Comité Spéciale de l'Année Géophysique Internationale
CIB	- Centre for Invasion Biology
CRAMRA	- Convention on the Regulation of the Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities
CRO	- Commonwealth Relations Office
CSIR	- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CTAE	- Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition
DAPG	- Dolphin Action and Protection Group
EIA	- Environmental Impact Assessment
FID	- Falkland Islands Dependencies
FIDS	- Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey
FRD	- Foundation for Research Development
GNU	- Government of National Unity
GSAGI	- Special Committee for the Geophysical Year
GSSA	- Geological Society of South Africa
HMS	- Her/His Majesty's Ship
SAS	- South African Ship
ICSEAF	- International Commission on South-East Atlantic Fisheries
ICSU	- International Council of Scientific Unions
IUCN	- International Union for Conservation of Nature
IGC	- International Geophysical Cooperation
IGY	- International Geophysical Year
IPY	- International Polar Year
IWC	- International Whaling Commission
M.V.	- Marine Vessel
NP	- National Party
NBSX	- Norwegian-Swedish-British Expedition
NGO	- Non-Governmental Organization
NRF	- National Research Foundation
PAC	- Pan-African Congress
RDP	- Reconstruction and Development Programme

SAARC	- South African Antarctic Research Committee
SACAR	- South African Committee for Antarctic Research
SANAE	- South African National Antarctic Expedition
SANAP	- South African National Antarctic Programme
SANCAR	- South African National Committee for Antarctic Research
SANCOR	- South African National Committee for Oceanographic Research
SASCAR	- South African Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research
SCAR	- Special (later Scientific) Committee on Antarctic Research
SCOR	- Special Committee for Oceanic Research
SPCA	- Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
S2A3	- South African Society for the Advancement of Science
UN	- United Nations
UNCLOS	- United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea
UNESCO	- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	- United States
USA	- United States of America
USSR	- Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics
WWII	- World War Two

## List of Archival Abbreviations

<b>ALP</b>	<b>Antarctic Legacy Project, Stellenbosch, South Africa</b>
<b>BPRC</b>	<b>Byrd Polar Research Centre, Columbus, OH, United States of America</b>
<b>DIRCO</b>	<b>Department of International Relations and Cooperation, Pretoria, South Africa</b>
BTS	Secretary of Foreign Affairs
<b>AREA</b>	<b>Institute of Contemporary History, Bloemfontein, South Africa</b>
PV	Private Collection
<b>KAB</b>	<b>Cape Archives Repository, Cape Town, South Africa</b>
GH	Government House
<b>SAB</b>	<b>South African National Archives, Pretoria, South Africa</b>
BLO	Ambassador, London
BTS	Secretary of Foreign Affairs
DWB	Director of Weather Bureau
GG	Governor-General
HEN	Department of Trade and Industry
PM	Prime Minister
VER	Department of Transport
<b>SANDFA</b>	<b>South African National Defence Force Archives, Pretoria</b>
<b>SPRI</b>	<b>Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, United Kingdom</b>
<b>STNM</b>	<b>Simon's Town Naval Museum, Simon's Town, South Africa</b>
<b>TNA</b>	<b>British National Archives, London, United Kingdom</b>
BJ	Meteorological Office
CAB	Cabinet Office
CO	Colonial Office
DO	Dominions Office
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FO	Foreign Office
PREM	Prime Minister's Office

**Note: All translations are my own unless indicated otherwise.**

## Introduction

There is an enduring debate amongst tourists and South Africans alike whether the southernmost tip of South Africa is Cape Point or Cape Agulhas. In fact, South Africa's southernmost point does not even appear on most maps of South Africa. It is the Prince Edward Islands, 1,800 kilometres south-south east of Port Elizabeth in the Indian Ocean. It is not an overseas territory, nor a colony, but a Special Nature Reserve and a ward of the City of Cape Town. Indeed, in terms of jurisdiction, one could argue that South Africa's furthest south is two buildings on Antarctica and the country's southernmost citizens those who call it home for a season or two.

This argument about the 'furthest south' is not meant to be a pedantic corrective of Trivial Pursuit or textbooks on South Africa, nor is it a call to heritage-brokers to include map inserts of the Prince Edward Islands on promotional material. The sub-Antarctic and Antarctic are indeed peripheral to the public imagination. Nevertheless, these largely neglected 'other' southernmost points of South Africa have been important enough to warrant significant funding from public coffers, with little tangible return.

This dissertation opens in 1919, the year during which the first well-publicised proposal for a South African Antarctic Research Expedition was made. In the same year, a Union commission was initiated to investigate the origins and impact of South Africa's most common natural disaster, drought. The Drought Commission made explicit the meteorological value of the sub-Antarctic islands to South Africa. This dissertation ends around 1995, when the new, democratically elected government decided to continue South African commitment to a scientific programme on Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic Prince Edward Islands. This dissertation is not meant to be an encyclopaedic account of activities undertaken by South Africans in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic, nor a chronicle of expeditions and anecdotes. It is also not a history of the Prince Edward Islands, Gough Island, Bouvet Island and it is certainly not a history of Antarctica.<sup>1</sup> Instead, this dissertation seeks to

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<sup>1</sup> The most famous Antarctic chronicle, or 'tome' as its author calls it, is Robert K. Headland, *Chronological List of Antarctic Expeditions and Related Historical Events* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). An encyclopaedic documentation of scientific activities can be found in G.E Fogg, *A History of Antarctic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Library shelves are packed with histories of Antarctica, written from a variety of perspectives and often in a popular tone. For recent examples see Marilyn Landis, *Antarctica: Exploring the Extreme – 400 Years of Adventure* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2001); David McGonigal, *Antarctica: the complete story* (London: Francis Lincoln, 2003). Also see Christine Hänel; Steven L. Chown and Kevin J. Gaston, *Gough Island: a Natural History* (Stellenbosch:

understand why South Africa became involved in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic, and what its involvement revealed about shifts within South Africa itself. Special reference is made to the roles played by science and the environment. In the broader sweep of South African history, both Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic would seem rather marginal. This dissertation will argue, however, that, even though the Islands and Antarctica as distinct entities might have been marginal, international and domestic frictions refracted through them, were not. These tensions included, for example, friction between science and the state, between conservation for exploitation and the preservation of the supposedly pristine, and between domestic politics and international ambitions. During the apartheid years the Antarctic Treaty System was a means for the pariah state South Africa to remain part of a major multilateral international agreement.

Four geographic places in the sub-Antarctic are included in this dissertation, namely Antarctica (specifically the part that became known as Queen Maud Land) and three Subantarctic Island groups: the Prince Edward Islands, Bouvet Island and Gough Island.<sup>2</sup>

By nature, the sub-Antarctic islands are, of course, different from the Antarctic. They are very small, wet, have abundant fauna and flora when compared to the Antarctic, and do not contain minerals of any great potential value.<sup>3</sup> Claims to the sub-Antarctic islands north of 60° south of the equator, and outside the Argentine/Chilean/British sector are generally internationally recognised.<sup>4</sup> The Prince Edward Islands are a sovereign territory of South Africa. In terms of the Antarctic continent and the area as defined by the Antarctic Treaty signed in 1959, South Africa neither claimed a part of the continent and its islands, nor

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Sunpress, 2005) and Aleks Terauds, Steven L. Chown, John Cooper and Peter Ryan, *Marion and Prince Edward: Africa's Southern Islands* (Stellenbosch: Sun Media, 2010). There are no similar histories for Bouvet Island.

<sup>2</sup> For the sake of simplicity this is a very broad definition of sub-Antarctic, a region between the Antarctic front and the sub-tropical front, or roughly between 40 degrees and 60 degrees south of the equator. There is, however, much debate among specialists about these boundaries, within as well as amongst different disciplines. For an overview of this debate, see Bernadette Hince, "Subantarctica: The Auckland Islands and John Druett's *Island of the lost*," *Shima: The International Journal of Research into Island Cultures* 2, 1 (2008), 103 – 114.

<sup>3</sup> Although some may potentially contain oil deposits in their surrounding seabeds, something that became a issue in the 1970s and again more recently (2011) around the Falkland Islands.

<sup>4</sup> Most notably, of course, the Falkland Islands/ Islas Malvinas, sovereignty disputes over which have had a major impact on Antarctic history.

recognised the claims of other countries.<sup>5</sup> Its status as a non-claimant state played a key role in certain policy decisions regarding the Antarctic.

The sub-Antarctic islands are part of the Antarctic environment, little pebbles in a vast ocean surrounding the continent. Or as Bernadette Hince poetically described them: ‘...they are the beads of a widely strung necklace on the cold neck of Antarctica, a necklace strung on water and wind. The very elements which separate the islands also hold them together.’<sup>6</sup> These islands are indeed linked to the continent both by non-human as well as the human elements.<sup>7</sup> In a way, the occupation of the Prince Edward Islands provided a ‘stepping stone’ for South Africa towards greater participation in the Antarctic. In South Africa, the same people and institutions were the driving forces and foot soldiers in the eventual permanent establishment of South African presence in both Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic. The greater geographical awareness of the ‘South Pole Area’ created by the occupation of the Prince Edward Islands, as chapter two shows, probably played into South Africa’s reaction when it was excluded from the United States proposal for UN trusteeship over the Antarctic. In the context of this dissertation, it was therefore necessary to include both the Prince Edward Islands and the Antarctic, although at times the one may feature more prominently than the other.

## Literature review<sup>8</sup>

Writing about the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic, means writing about places without a national identity or citizens in the strict sense of the word. This, coupled with the paucity of secondary sources focusing on South Africa, compels the historian to a transnational and even trans-disciplinary approach to secondary literature. Three broad categories of literature had been consulted in the writing of this dissertation. The greater part loosely resorted under polar, specifically Antarctic, literature. A second category related to the history of science and environmental history. The third category was not a category as such, but rather a miscellany of works that either served as theoretical underpinning for a specific argument (the gender

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<sup>5</sup> It can be argued, of course, that the Union of South Africa implicitly recognised claims by Britain and New Zealand before the 1927 Balfour declaration (see chapter one). South Africa has not, however, officially recognised any of the claims as a sovereign nation state.

<sup>6</sup> Bernadette Hince, “Teeth in the wind: an environmental history of the sub-Antarctic Islands,” (PhD dissertation, Australian National University, Canberra, 2006), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> This section benefitted from discussions with Peder Roberts and Luis Guilherme Resend de Assis, Stellenbosch, July 2011. Also note that with the centenary celebrations of the respective journeys of Robert Scott, Roald Amundsen and Douglas Mawson, several new books were published in 2011 and 2012. They were often not distributed to South Africa and appeared when my research was at an advanced stage, making a survey of all the absolutely latest material impractical.

constructs behind beards) or to elucidate certain facts (the symptoms of feline enteritis). This literature review will mostly concentrate on the first two categories. The aim of this literature review is to orientate the dissertation within current historiography rather than to give an exhaustive account of that historiography. It should also be noted that many Antarctic books were unavailable in South African tertiary institutions.<sup>9</sup> The largest collection of polar literature in the country was moved to a non-loan Special Collection at the University of Cape Town shortly after I commenced my studies, which limited access.

There is an increasing amount of research into polar history. It is perhaps too soon to speak of polar history as a subfield of history in the Anglophone world, less still a sub-discipline.<sup>10</sup> Polar history is challenging in a number of ways. The first difficulty arises with the appellation *polar* history. There are many similarities between the earth's polar extremes, some of which will also transpire in this dissertation. What happened in the Arctic often had an impact on the Antarctic. Institutionally, Northern hemispheric countries usually house their Antarctic and Arctic in the same government departments and research institutes.<sup>11</sup> There are, however, crucial differences that have bearing on their histories.<sup>12</sup> For the historian and human geographer, the two most crucial differences probably relate to divergent patterns of human habitation and the geopolitics of borders. The Arctic, on the one hand, has been inhabited for an estimated ten thousand years.<sup>13</sup> Humans were able to sustain themselves

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<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, two of the books I used most, were loaned initially from the University of Botswana, a country with no Antarctic presence at all. They were Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics in Antarctica: Views from the Southern Ocean Rim* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1997) and Klaus Dodds, *Pink Ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (London: I.B Tauris, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Admittedly, due to language constraints, this literature review draws overwhelmingly on sources available in English. Much of the Argentinean or Chilean histories of the Antarctic, like their British counterparts, were nationalistic, with as many versions of the history of the Antarctic Peninsula as there are claims. The Falklands/Islas Malvinas disputes further complicates matters. Adrian Howkins mentioned three such diverse examples: Oscar Pinochet de la Barra, *La Antártica Chilena* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial del Pacífico, 1948); Juan Carlos Puig, *La Antártida argentina ante el derecho* (Buenos Aires: R. Delpalma, 1960) and Eric William Hunter Christie, *The Antarctic problem: an historical and political study* (London, 1951). Howkins rightly noted that 'such histories often focus teleologically on acts of discovery and administration in order to prove on particular point and usually lack any depth of historical analysis of "why" claims were made when they were made, or what was intended by such actions.' Adrian Howkins, "Frozen Empire: A History of the Antarctic Sovereignty Dispute between Britain, Argentina, and Chile, 1939-1959," (PhD dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, Austin 2008).

<sup>11</sup> For example the Alfred Wegner Institut für Polarforschung in Germany, the Nørsk Polarinstitut in Norway and the Russian Arctic and Antarctic Institute, all of which are involved with both logistics and research, or the Scott Polar Research Institute in Britain and its US counterpart, the Byrd Polar Research Center that focus on scientific and social science research at both ends of the earth. Similarly, Antarctic institutes mostly include sub-Antarctic activities as well. On the latter see Hince, "Subantarctica," 104.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, David Sugden, *Arctic and Antarctic: a Modern Geographical Synthesis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982).

<sup>13</sup> Derek Hayes, *Historical Atlas of the Arctic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 7.

drawing on the Arctic environment.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, humans first set eyes on the Antarctic in the early nineteenth century<sup>15</sup> and have had to import all the necessary sustenance and technologies into the Antarctic to survive.<sup>16</sup> The Arctic denotes the northern limits of continents with sovereign states, territories encircling a frozen ocean. The Antarctic is a continent surrounded by the circumpolar Southern Ocean. None of its sovereignty disputes have been settled, and the treaty approach to the sovereignty issue is deliberately ambivalent. Thus, although there were overlaps, especially during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, the historical trajectories of the Arctic and the Antarctic were divergent. As this dissertation is about the *Antarctic* (and the sub-*Antarctic*), the focus is on works relating to Antarctic history. More critical scholarship, however, has been written about the Arctic as geopolitical area, Arctic space(s) and nature(s) as well as the histories of exploration, empire, science and gender in the Arctic.<sup>17</sup> These approaches to Arctic histories can perhaps most fruitfully inform studies of its polar opposite.

Another stumbling block to Antarctic history as a sub-field of history and more importantly, in its usefulness, is that little of it has been written by professional historians or historical geographers. The bulk of Antarctic and sub-Antarctic histories have been produced by librarians, archivists, expedition members and their progeny, and polar enthusiasts. Those written by librarians and archivists often tend to be Rankean to the extreme.<sup>18</sup> They are largely catalogues of events or edited collections of letters. They were often in biographical format and tended towards the hagiographic, or in the case of Roland Huntford, biographies of failures.<sup>19</sup> As is the case with the histories of expeditions elsewhere, reports and memoirs written by the actors partaking in them, more often than not have more value as primary accounts and sources of facts rather than as interpretative or analytical histories. These

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<sup>14</sup> Stephen Pyne, *The Ice* (London: Phoenix, 2009), 40.

<sup>15</sup> There are some oral history indications that the Maori at least crossed the Antarctic circle in the first millennium Common Era. Turi MacFarlane, "Maori Association with the Antarctic – *Tiro o te Moana ki te Tonga*," (Graduate Certificate in Antarctic Studies Essay, Canterbury University, Canterbury, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Pyne, *The Ice*, 40.

<sup>17</sup> Good examples are Michael Bravo and Sverker Sörlin ,eds. *Narrating the Arctic: a cultural history of Nordic Spaces* (Canton: Science History Publications, 2000) and Frank Moeller and Samu Pehkonen, eds. *Encountering the North: Cultural Geography, International Relations and Northern Landscapes* (Birmingham: Ashgate, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> For example Ann Savours, *The Voyages of the Discovery: The Illustrated History of Scott's Ship* (London: Virgin, 1992); Robert K. Headland, *The Island of South Georgia* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1984).

<sup>19</sup> See Hugh Robert Mill, *The Siege of the South Pole* (London: A. Rivers, 1905) for an early example. Roland Huntford, *Scott and Amundsen* (New York: Atheneum, 1984)

antiquarian histories also mostly focussed on the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, or the so-called ‘heroic age’.<sup>20</sup>

Most of the South African historical sources on the Prince Edward Islands, and South Africa’s Antarctic and sub-Antarctic history in general, have been written by scientists with a keen interest in heritage rather than history. Early historical accounts by South Africans were mostly written by early expedition members as first-person narratives.<sup>21</sup> This lack of critical distance detracts from their value as secondary sources. In the past few decades, most of the work on the history of South Africa, Antarctica and the Islands, has appeared in newsletters and popular magazines.<sup>22</sup> There were also a few reports, most notably one for the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), on the historical sites of the Prince Edward Islands.<sup>23</sup> Recently, two popular natural history books have been published on the Prince Edward Islands and Gough Island respectively.<sup>24</sup> An introductory scientific book on the Prince Edward Islands included a chapter on the ‘human history’ of the islands.<sup>25</sup> A handful of articles have appeared in peer-reviewed academic journals, mostly in the now defunct *South African Journal of Antarctic Research* (1971-1995). The majority of these articles also

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<sup>20</sup> Edward J. Larson, *An Empire of Ice: Scott, Shackleton, and the Heroic Age of Antarctic Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), xi.

<sup>21</sup> John H. Marsh, *No Pathway Here* (Cape Town: Howard B. Timmins, 1948); Allan B. Crawford, “Establishment of the South African meteorological station on Marion Island, 1947-1948,” *Polar Record*, 5 (1950), 576-579; J.J. la Grange, “The South African Station on Marion Island 1948-53,” *Polar Record*, 7 (1954), 155-158; J.J. la Grange, “The Beginning: 1 Taking part in the Trans-Antarctic Expedition,” *South African Journal for Antarctic Research*, 21, 2 (1991), 92-96; J.J. La Grange, “The Beginning: 2,” *South African Journal for Antarctic Research*, 21, 2 (1991), 98-106; André le R. van der Merwe, *Die wit horison: Antarktiese dagboekverhaal, Desember 1959-Januarie 1961* (Human en Rousseau: Cape Town, 1968).

<sup>22</sup> John Cooper, “History of the Prince Edward Islands: Did German warships visit during World War II?” *SASCAR Newsletter*, 23 (1986), 1-2; John Cooper, “History of the Prince Edward Islands: II. The first female visitors,” *SASCAR Newsletter* 23 (1986), 6-7; John Cooper, “History of the Prince Edward Islands: III. More on early female visitors,” *SASCAR Newsletter* 24 (1986), 7; Valdon Smith, “How South Africa got its islands,” *Quest* 1, 2 (2004), 28; R. Braumann, “Flitterwochen auf Marion,” *GEO: Das neue Bild der Erde*, 5 (May 1982), 68-88; J.J. la Grange, “Sojourn on Marion Island,” *Newsletter Weather Bureau*, 39 (1952), 4-7; Leonie Joubert, *Invaded: The biological invasion of South Africa* (Johannesburg: WITS University Press, 2009), 192-199.

<sup>23</sup> John Cooper and Graham Avery, “Historical sites at the Prince Edward Islands,” *South African National Scientific Progress Report* 128 (1986), 1-82.

<sup>24</sup> Hänel et.al, *Gough Island* and Terauds et.al, *Marion and Prince Edward*. There are also at least two popular pictorial books on Antarctica involving South African scientists and photographers (but neither covering South Africa and the Antarctic). They are Creina Bond, Roy W. Siegfried and Peter Johnson (eds) *Antarctica: No Single Country, No Single Sea* (Cape Town: Struik, 1979) and Peter Steyn, *Antarctic Impressions: Seasons in the Southern Ocean* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> John Cooper, “Human History,” in Steven L. Chown and Pierre W. Froneman (eds.), *The Prince Edward Islands: Land-Sea Interactions in a Changing Ecosystem* (Stellenbosch: Sunpress, 2008), 334-337.

appeared in a single issue, commemorating the thirty-year anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty, and were written by scientists intimately linked to Antarctica and the islands.<sup>26</sup>

Marine and industrial archaeologists can make fruitful studies of the sub-Antarctic islands, especially in researching the whaling and sealing industry. On the Prince Edward Islands preliminary archaeological excavations had been done, most notably by then honours student, Tom Graham as well as Johan Loock and Jaco Boshoff.<sup>27</sup> A survey of historical sites was privately printed in 1997,<sup>28</sup> and the South African Maritime Museum and National Cultural History Museum published a report on the preservation of historical sealing sites on Marion.<sup>29</sup> The ‘preliminary’ nature of these archaeological reports become obvious when compared to the sophisticated analysis of, for example, recent South American work that drew on social history for sketching the lonely and fascinating lives of the sealers.<sup>30</sup>

To disregard these works out of hand will, however, be conceitful and impoverishing. Most of these accounts were meticulously researched and they were frequently well written, providing coherent and detailed narratives. Even so, they frequently lack depth of analysis. Sometimes, they render Antarctica and the Islands irrelevant to the inhabited world, a reified place of both unimaginable beauty and cruelty, and focus on the heroic feats of individual men confronting that environment.

During the 1980s, however, as Antarctica was placed on the global agenda, as chapter four will show, scholars from the humanities started taking an interest in Antarctica and more critical works started to appear, chipping away at the linear, triumphalist ‘whiggish’ narrative. These works did not deny that the Antarctic, the Islands and the Southern Ocean are environmentally and politically unique places. They did, however, see them as more that

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<sup>26</sup> Willem F. Visagie, “Foreword,” *South African Journal of Antarctic Research*, 21, 2 (1991), 75. The articles appearing in this issue included: Cooper and Headland, “A History of South African Involvement”; La Grange, “The Beginning: 1;” La Grange, “The Beginning 2” L.V. Shannon, “A Photographic Account of Voyages of Captain R.L.V Shannon to the Antarctic in the 1920s”; John D. Vail, “South Africa: Road to the Antarctic Treaty”; W. Roy Siegfried, “Three Decades of South African Science in Antarctica.”

<sup>27</sup> Tom Graham, “Cultural resource management of the Prince Edward Islands” (BA Honours dissertation, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 1989).

<sup>28</sup> D. Hart and Johan Loock, *Survey of Historical Sites on Marion Island* (Privately Printed: Cape Town, July 1997).

<sup>29</sup> Jaco J. Boshoff, and J.A van Schalkwyk, *The Archaeology of Sealing Sites on Marion Island* (South African Maritime Museum and National Cultural History Museum: Cape Town and Pretoria, 1999).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Andrés Zarankin and María Ximena Senatore, “Archaeology in Antarctica: Nineteenth-Century Capitalism Expansion Strategies,” *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 9, 1 (March 2005), 44. To be fair, South Africa never had a dedicated archaeological programme on the islands and the archaeological work conducted had been done at the behest of heritage agencies, not universities. There are plans in the pipeline for a more dedicated, academic archaeological programme which will include overwintering field work.

discrete geographic locations and located them in their global context, embedded in broader international and domestic processes. As Adrian Howkins remarked, ‘so much Antarctic history took place outside the continent: on the streets of Buenos Aires, for example, during nationalist demonstrations in the 1930s and 1940s, or at the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, England.’<sup>31</sup>

In the wake of the Falklands War (1982), Peter Beck added much needed historical depth to British Antarctic studies, by problematizing British Antarctic policy as part of British imperialism.<sup>32</sup> Beck followed it up with a book that became a foundation for more critical studies of the area in terms of international relations. *The International Politics of Antarctica* was published at a time when Antarctica and the surrounding oceans were under public scrutiny with the Antarctic being on the UN agenda and the Antarctic Treaty negotiating a minerals regime.<sup>33</sup> The book’s scope was broad and it focussed only on political history, excluding social, cultural and environmental histories. It was, however, a departure from the valorisation of Antarctica as a peaceful continent for science.

Drawing inspiration from Beck, but more explicitly working in a post-colonial framework and using the tools of critical geopolitics, Klaus Dodds published a wide range of works on the Antarctic that deftly deconstructed a number of myths about the Antarctic continent. These works also made inroads in tracing ‘the changing location of the Antarctic imagination.’<sup>34</sup> Antarctic histories, Dodds argued, were not only about Antarctica, but also about colonialism, nationalism and masculinity.<sup>35</sup> Included in Dodds’ wide range of publication are some chapters and articles on South Africa and the south Atlantic, the Prince Edward Islands and Antarctica.<sup>36</sup> The first was an article on Argentine-South African

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<sup>31</sup> Adrian Howkins, “‘Have you been there?’ Some thoughts on (not) visiting Antarctica,” *Environmental History* 15 (July 2010), 517.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Beck, “British Antarctic policy in the early twentieth century,” *Polar Record* 21, 134 (May 1983). A considerably extended version of this article was published as 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).

<sup>33</sup> Peter Beck, *The International Politics of Antarctica* (Kent: Croom Helm, 1986).

<sup>34</sup> Dodds, *Geopolitics in Antarctica*.

<sup>35</sup> See for example Dodds, *Pink Ice*; Klaus J. Dodds and Kathryn Yussoff, “Settlement and unsettlement in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Antarctica,” *Polar Record*, 41 (2005), 141-155; Klaus Dodds, “The great trek: New Zealand and the British/Commonwealth 1995-58 Trans-Antarctic Expedition,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 33,1 (2005), 93-114; Klaus J. Dodds, “Post-colonial Antarctica: an emerging engagement,” *Polar Record* 42 (2006), 59-70.

<sup>36</sup> Klaus Dodds, “Creating a Strategic Crisis out of a Communist Drama? Argentine and South Africa Geographs of the South Atlantic,” *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinamericanos y del Caribe/ European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 56 (June 1994), 33-54; Klaus Dodds, “South Africa and the Antarctic, 1920-1960,” *Polar Record* 32 (1996), 25-42. Klaus Dodds, “South Africa, the South Atlantic

interrelationships with the south Atlantic as a container of potential geopolitical crisis, partly because of strategic minerals in Antarctica and South Africa, and a communist naval threat.<sup>37</sup> Dodds also explored South Africa's Antarctic and sub-Antarctic history from 1920 to 1960, drawing on archival sources. It was the first work that was a sustained *critical* interpretation of government documents relating to the Antarctic. The article initiated a contextualisation of South Africa's involvement with the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic within its foreign policy.<sup>38</sup> There were, however, also domestic factors at play, especially with regards to the Prince Edward Islands, that were neglected (see chapter two). In a follow-up article, Dodds gave a general overview of South African involvement in the Antarctic from 1960-1995, introducing some discrete geopolitical themes.<sup>39</sup> These two articles then formed the backdrop for a chapter in his book, *Geopolitics in Antarctica: Views from the Southern Ocean Rim*. It covered the period of the 1920s to 1996, focussing on the impact of geopolitics on military-strategic considerations.<sup>40</sup> He had limited space and used broad strokes to paint the South African story with the subsequent loss of nuance. A critical approach was maintained, however, and largely came from the fact that the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic were not treated as isolated, reified entities but explored in a broader context. Peder Roberts noted of this kind of focalisation: 'Despite being literally at the end of the world, the Antarctic was clearly a geopolitical theatre where European goals and anxieties – involving science, whaling, nationalism, imperialism and much more – were messily inscribed.'<sup>41</sup>

Two South African works primarily drew on archival sources. The first was a thesis by Rene Laverde, who reconstructed shifts in South Africa's Antarctic policy drawing on the limited documentation the archives made available to him.<sup>42</sup> It was, however, thin on historical analysis and except for the more contemporaneous chapter on the UN and Antarctica, it did

and the international politics of Antarctica," *South African Journal of International Affairs* 3 (1995), 60-80; Dodds, *Geopolitics in Antarctica*; Klaus Dodds, "South Africa Implementing the Protocol on Environmental Protection," in Davor Vidas, ed, *Implementing the environmental protection regime for the Antarctic* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000). Also available at <http://www.gg.rhul.ac.uk/cedar/cedar-papers/paper30.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Dodds, "Creating a Strategic Crisis out of a Communist Drama?" and Dodds, "South Africa, the South Atlantic and the international politics of Antarctica," 60-80

<sup>38</sup> Klaus Dodds, "South Africa and the Antarctic, 1920-1960," *Polar Record* 32 (1996), 25-42.

<sup>39</sup> Dodds, "South Africa, the South Atlantic and the international politics of Antarctica."

<sup>40</sup> Dodds, *Geopolitics in Antarctica*.

<sup>41</sup> Peder W.C Roberts, "A frozen field of dreams: Science, Strategy and the Antarctic in Norway, Sweden and the British Empire," (PhD dissertation, Stanford University, Stanford, 2010), 2.

<sup>42</sup> Laverde's thesis was written in 1988 at a time when access to archival sources were severely restricted by the law. Access to archival sources are currently remarkably free (state documents relating to the Antarctic that are still classified in other countries have been declassified in South Africa, where the general embargo is 20 years). In practice, however, access to information has been hampered by the skills shortage in South Africa's civil service. As of October 2011 the situation might change drastically with the passing of a new state secrecy bill.

not explore why certain policy decisions were made. It also barely mentioned the Prince Edward Islands, which played a crucial role in certain aspects of South Africa's Antarctic policy, as chapter two will show.<sup>43</sup> John Viall, then a law advisor in South Africa's Department of Foreign Affairs, wrote a short article in the commemorative issue of the South African Journal of Antarctic Research, using those documents he could access in the Foreign Affairs archives but it lacked any historical contextualisation and analysis.<sup>44</sup>

A good example of a history of Antarctica that attempted to focalise through Antarctica but remain relevant to the humans who read the history, was Stephen Pyne's *The Ice*. At times rather overwritten (Pyne revels in displaying his mastery of the cryospheric sciences), it became the first step in an environmental history of the Antarctic that drew on human mentalities of ice.<sup>45</sup> It was followed by books such as Paul Simpson-Houseley's *Antarctica: Exploration, Perception and Metaphor* (1992); Lisa Bloom's *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (1993) and Francis Spufford's *I may be some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (1996) that describe encounters with the Arctic and Antarctic in terms of cultural history and literary concepts like the sublime.<sup>46</sup> Whilst Spufford's book was an especially good example of creative cultural history, in terms of environment at least, ice and cold landscapes simply did not resonate with sub-tropical South Africans in a similar way. Both Bloom and Spufford, especially in their descriptions of Edwardian expeditions, delineated how these expeditions and their explorers were situated within the broader mentalities of the time. Although this dissertation does not deal with the long nineteenth century, these works were groundbreaking in their cultural critique of polar exploration and Bloom's interrogation of gender and race were particularly resonant in the South African context.

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<sup>43</sup> René Laverde, "The development, pursuit and maintenance of a South African Antarctic Policy, 1926-1988," (Masters thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1990). Another South African social science MA was written by Cornelis van der Lugt in 1992. It concentrated on regime theory using Antarctica as a case-study and not South Africa and Antarctica in particular. Cornelis van der Lugt, "Internationale Regimes en Antarktika: 'n Teoretiese Gevallestudie," (MA thesis, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, 1992).

<sup>44</sup> All of the authors in the commemorative journal of the *South African Journal of Antarctic Research* [21, 2 (1991)] seemed unaware of Laverde's work.

<sup>45</sup> The environmental historian Donald Worster accurately critiqued the book thus: 'The book has more flaws than an ablating floe, but it also has something rather heroic in its concept and execution, compelling us to admiration.' Donald Worster, "Book Reviews: *The Ice: Journey to Antarctica*," *Environmental Review: ER* 11, 4 (Winter 1987), 307-309.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Simpson Housley, *Antarctica: Exploration, Perception, Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 1992); Lisa Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) and Francis Spufford, *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996).

The critical turn in Antarctic history, its interrogation in the frameworks of the empire and the post-colonial, led to revisions to the uncritical heroic era historiography. Brigid Hains's book, *The Ice and the Inland: Mawson, Flynn and the Myth of the Frontier* skilfully combined the histories of empire, settlement, masculinity and frontier environments in the Australian context. Although her book focussed on heroic-era explorer Douglas Mawson, it recognised the complex layers to be taken into account when writing Antarctic history as imperial history.<sup>47</sup> The cultural geographies by Christy Collis richly illustrated how colonial spatialities in Antarctica draw on geopolitical epistemologies. This is also a salient point in the South African context, considering the debacle of the 'biggest apartheid flag' being constructed on Antarctica (see chapter four).<sup>48</sup>

Recently, the first signs of *Antarctic* history acquiring the accoutrements of a sub-field started to appear. A history group was established under the auspices of the Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research (SCAR), the authoritative international body for Antarctic Research.<sup>49</sup> Since its establishment in 2005, the group has met on five different continents. All the workshops and seminars have been conducted in English, yet the topics were diverse and by no means Anglo-centric. Many participants, if not most, present in their second language. These presentations have been of varying academic depth and quality. Several might be of interest to a broader scholarly audience and some of interest only to other polar enthusiasts. It has nevertheless been a very useful platform to interact with scholars from a range of backgrounds in the humanities working with geographic area that is largely unknown. This global membership is hardly surprising given the institutional background of SCAR as an organisational platform borne out of the International Geophysical Year's activities in Antarctica in which twelve countries as diverse as the Soviet Union, South Africa and Argentina partook. Not many academics in the humanities concern themselves with Antarctic matters, and less still would describe themselves as exclusively polar historians. Indeed, the best and most relevant histories of Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic islands have been written mostly by, amongst others, historians of science, of the environment, of Latin American geopolitics, Commonwealth Studies and critical geopolitics.

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<sup>47</sup> Brigid Hains, *The Ice and the Inland: Mawson, Flynn and the Myth of the Frontier* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2002).

<sup>48</sup> Christy Collis and Quentin Stevens, "Cold colonies: Antarctic spatialities at Mawson and McMurdo stations," *Cultural Geographies* 14 (2007), 234-254. Also see chapter four of this dissertation.

<sup>49</sup> SCAR is also affiliated to the International Council for Science, previously known as the International Council for Scientific Unions (ICSU).

This dissertation also drew on some aspects of environmental history and the history of science. It is not primarily a history of science or environmental history of Antarctica, but because it makes special reference to the roles of science and the environment, these fields were influential. The field of environmental history in South Africa closely dovetails with that of colonial and post-colonial history.<sup>50</sup> Two interrelated themes of South African environmental histories were particularly salient: histories of wilderness and histories of invasive species. Both Antarctica and the Prince Edward Islands were considered ‘wildernesses’ and similar to mainland South Africa, the value attached to wilderness changed over time. Unlike the case with South Africa, there were no indigenous inhabitants to either incorporate or remove from the ‘wilderness.’<sup>51</sup> In a way related to issues around ‘wilderness,’ was the introduction of alien and invasive species, especially on the Prince Edward Islands. Invasive species (both fauna and flora) have been a concern in South Africa, at least since colonial era agriculture, for cultural as well as economic reasons.<sup>52</sup> It also became a key research subject on the Prince Edward Islands, where major attempts were launched to rid Marion Island of some invasive species, a process that threw into relief some of the cultural and scientific values attached to the Islands.

The history of science in South Africa is somewhat less developed than environmental history, although many environmental histories include the role of scientific expertise,

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<sup>50</sup> Sverker Sörlin and Paul Warde, “The problem of the problem of environmental history: a re-reading of the field,” *Environmental History* 12 (January 2007), 111. For historiographical essays on environmental history in South Africa see P. Steyn, “The Greening of our Past? An Assessment of South African Environmental History,” *New Contree* 46 (November 1999). <http://h-net.org/~environ/historiography/safrica.htm>; Lance van Sittert, “The Nature of Power: Cape Environmental History, the History of Ideas and Neoliberal historiography,” *Journal of African History* 45 (2004); Jane Carruthers, “Tracking in Game Trials: Looking Afresh at the Politics of Environmental History in South Africa,” *Environmental History* 11. <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/eh/11.4/carruthers.html>

<sup>51</sup> Jane Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park: A Social and Political History* (Durban: University of Natal Press, 1995); Terence Ranger “Whose Heritage? The Case of Matoba National Park,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15(1989) and Shirley Brooks “Images of ‘Wild Africa’: Nature Tourism and the (re)creation of Hluhluwe Game Reserve, 1930-1945,” *The Journal of Historical Geography* 31 (2005), 220-240.

<sup>52</sup> The historical scholarship on invasive species in South Africa is growing: See for example William Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock and the Environment, 1970-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Lance van Sittert, “‘Our irrepressible fellow colonist’: The Biological Invasion of Prickly Pear (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) in the Eastern Cape, c. 1890- c. 1910,” in Ruth Edgecombe and Bill Guest, eds, *South Africa’s Environmental History: Cases and Comparisons* (Athens: Ohio University Press, Series in Ecology and History and Cape Town: David Phillip, 2002); Lance van Sittert “‘The Seed Blows about in Every Breeze’: Noxious Weed Eradication in the Cape Colony,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, 4 (December 2000), 655- 672; Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, “Naturing the Nation: Aliens, Apocalypse and the Postcolonial State,” *Journal for Southern African Studies* 27,3 (September 2001), 627-651; Peder Anker, “The Politics of Ecology in South Africa on the Radical Left,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 37, 2 (Summer 2004), 303-331.

especially in colonial and pre-World War Two contexts.<sup>53</sup> Not surprisingly, scientific racism and public health sciences are also two areas that have been more regularly investigated.<sup>54</sup> Saul Dubow's *A Commonwealth of Science* is probably the fullest interpretative account of science in South Africa, but it included the apartheid state only in the conclusion, concentrating on technicism and engineering feats.<sup>55</sup> In terms of science and South Africanism Dubow and Anker's works provided some background to this dissertation. There is however still many uncharted histories of science in especially apartheid South Africa. This dissertation seeks to start opening up at least one new route – the role of science and multilateralism in the apartheid state.

## Sources and method

Whilst giving consideration to the relationship between the historian and the subject is not unusual,<sup>56</sup> discussing institutional and funding specific complexities are usually the domain of public and business historians contracted by the institutions about which they are writing.<sup>57</sup> Although this dissertation has not been commissioned *per se*, similar historiographical questions arose that had to be negotiated. It is therefore necessary to place this research in its

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<sup>53</sup> There are works that *document* South African scientific activity. A.C Brown, ed, *A History of Scientific Endeavour in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1977); D.G Kingwill, *The CSIR: The first 40 years* (Pretoria: CSIR, 1990). Pre-World War II histories that link science, the empire and the environment include, amongst others, Peder Anker, *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Karen Brown, "Tropical Medicine and Animal Diseases: Onderstepoort and the Development of Veterinary Science in South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 31, 3 (2005) William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> See for example Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Harriet Deacon, "Racism and Medical Science in South Africa's Cape Colony in the Mid-to Late Nineteenth Century," *Osiris* 15 (2000), 190 – 206.

<sup>55</sup> Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa, 1820-2000* (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2006).

<sup>56</sup> There is one English-language article that is specifically about writing Antarctic history within the framework of environmental history, by Adrian Howkins, "FORUM 'have you been there?' some thoughts on (not) visiting Antarctica," *Environmental History* 15 (July 2010), 514-519. In the case of Antarctica, historians such as Pyne in *The Ice* and Tom Griffiths in *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica* (Harvard University Press: 2007) included reflections on their own visits to Antarctica, whilst William L. Fox made reference to the United States Antarctic Visiting Artists and Writers Programme that 'cared more about connecting with broader public sentiment than with art critics and curators' in *Terra Antarctica* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2005), 241. According to the NSF-website, they do not support short-term journalistic projects but projects that 'increase understanding and appreciation of the Antarctic and of human activities on the southernmost continent.'

[http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=503518&org=OPP](http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503518&org=OPP) (Accessed 10 July 2011).

The South African National Antarctic Programme recently (in 2011) added 'The History, Sociology and Politics of Antarctic Research and Exploration' as a research theme.

[http://www.sanap.ac.za/sanap\\_research/sanap\\_research.html](http://www.sanap.ac.za/sanap_research/sanap_research.html) (Accessed 10 July 2011).

SANAP never had a formal visiting artists and writers programme, although some occasionally accompanied summer expeditions on ventures outside formal press visitations.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Joseph Pratt "Warts and All? An Elusive Balance in Contracted Corporate Histories about Energy and Environment," *The Public Historian*, 26, 1 (Winter 2004), 21-40.

wider institutional context. The dissertation formed part of a larger grant from the National Research Foundation (NRF) to build a platform to stimulate research in the social sciences and humanities aspects of Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic.<sup>58</sup> The NRF, one of South Africa's main governmental funding bodies, is also responsible for the scientific programmes of the South African National Antarctic Programme (SANAP). The science projects, in turn, are administered by several South African universities. The social science grant carried the approval of SANAP, and fitted into their new research theme on the 'History, Sociology and Politics of Antarctic Research and Exploration.'<sup>59</sup> It has been hosted by two universities. The University of Cape Town has been tasked with digitising the materials in the National Archives. Stellenbosch University hosted another part of the initiative – the Antarctic Legacy Project (ALP). The project's aims were, broadly, to 'collect and store the stories, memories, photographs and other documents pertaining to South Africans in the Antarctic and on the Prince Edward islands since the turn of the previous century.'<sup>60</sup> It also had the specific mandate to develop new knowledge fields and stimulate *social science* research in the South African Antarctic Programme.<sup>61</sup> The collection, digitisation and organisation of these private sources were the responsibility of a full-time researcher, Dora Scott.<sup>62</sup> My main responsibility was conducting oral history interviews to use in my dissertation and in the digital archive. It made logistic sense to coordinate our research, drawing on the same resources and networks and to prevent duplication.

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<sup>58</sup> Steven Chown et al "Promoting South Africa's Antarctic Legacy: A Platform for Social Sciences, Law and Humanities Research," Proposal to the NRF (2008). The National Research Foundation is an independent government agency that was established by the National Research Foundation Research Act (Act No 23 of 1998). Its object is 'to support and promote research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary research facilities in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of science and technology, including indigenous knowledge and thereby to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of all the people of the Republic.' Article 3, National Research Foundation Research Act (Act No 23 of 1998). The Fund for Research and Development (NRF), a predecessor of the NRF, took over from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in 1989, after the latter commercialised.

<sup>59</sup> [http://www.sanap.ac.za/sanap\\_research/sanap\\_research.html](http://www.sanap.ac.za/sanap_research/sanap_research.html) (Accessed 12 March 2010 and 11 July 2011). On the latter date, the research themes were discussed in more detail. The objective of this theme is 'to explore the historical sociological and political dimensions of South African Antarctic research and explorations. the theme also serves as a platform to broaden scholarship and capacity in Antarctic research, both in terms of the disciplinary base as well as the researcher communities and individuals who actively engage with Antarctica' (sic.)

<sup>60</sup> <http://academic.sun.ac.za/cib/antarcticlegacy/> (Accessed 11 July 2011).

<sup>61</sup> 'Arts' or the 'humanities' were not mentioned, it would seem that 'social sciences' were used loosely in this case. The funding came from the budget of the Knowledge Fields Development Directorate, that 'facilitates the creation of new knowledge and research capacity within the context of South Africa's research and development challenges and strategic initiatives.' [http://www.nrf.ac.za/about\\_key\\_facts.php?fid=13](http://www.nrf.ac.za/about_key_facts.php?fid=13) (Accessed 11 July 2011).

<sup>62</sup> Dora Scott was variously called a researcher, a social scientist, a database manager, an archivist or a technical officer, depending on the context – an example of the fluidity of these categories in everyday practice.

Conveniently, and probably not coincidentally, the ALP coincided with a number of Antarctic half-centenaries and centenaries.<sup>63</sup> It overlapped with the inauguration of a R250 million base on Marion Island and building of a ZAR1.3 billion polar vessel, all of which increased the presence the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic in the South African press. The ALP itself was also publicised of in several newspapers, magazines and radio stations.<sup>64</sup> The publicity, promoting the ALP as a heritage project, proved tremendously helpful in the research process, especially in terms of making valuable contacts with team members, construction workers and other logistic support staff. At no stage was there interference with the content or interpretations of the academic work, yet by very closely collaborating on the project, and being funded by it, it was necessary to be aware that it was exactly the kind of heritage drive that historians should interrogate and problematize. It was also a project that was driven by scientists. Although we did not quite have the experience of being rendered the ‘data serfs’ of the ‘scientist model lords,’<sup>65</sup> we encountered a perception of history that echoed Marten Reuss’ experience when working on water history. Scientists and engineers took an approach that ‘stressed description rather than evaluation, chronology rather than history, facts rather than knowledge’. It is an approach that is also favoured by antiquarians and some heritage practitioners. It played to linear and causal world more familiar to engineers and scientists than historians and human geographers.<sup>66</sup> This did not, however, necessarily detract from the value of working on

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<sup>63</sup> These included the 50-year commemoration of the signing of the Antarctic Treaty (1959), the 50<sup>th</sup> South African Antarctica National Expedition Team (2010-2012) and the centenary of Scott and Amundsen’s “Race to the South Pole” (2011). The ‘cult of the centenary’ is often closely linked to the invention of tradition, and all the trappings that come with it. See R. Quinault for the modern historical origins of this phenomenon in “The Cult of the Centenary, c.1784-1914,” *Historical Research*, 71, 176 (October 1998), 303–323; Terry McDonald and Mélanie Méthot made the point that centennial celebrations sometimes only catch the public imagination when linked to a latent nationalism in “That Impulse that Bids a People to Honour its Past: The Nature and Purpose of Centennial Celebrations,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12, 4 (2006), 307–320. For a South African example of how the political dimension help to ‘give shape and form to commemoration,’ see Albert Grundlingh, “Reframing Remembrance: The Politics of the Centenary Commemoration of the South African War of 1899-1902,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 2 (June 2004). It is not only the centenary celebrations of great political events or wars that often serve more contemporary agendas. For an example from the sciences, see Patria Fara “Isaac Newton lived here: Sites of Memory and Scientific Heritage,” *British Journal for the History of Science* 33 (2000), 407–426.

<sup>64</sup> See for example, Sheree Bega, “Hunting down SA’s Antarctic pioneers,” *Saturday Argus* (18 September 2010), John Yeld, “Historian brings Antarctica story in from the cold,” *Cape Argus* (23 February 2011); Vicus Bürger, “Oudleerling van Bfn na Antarktika op pad,” *Die Volksblad* (4 December 2010); Munyaradzi Makoni, “South Africa: Antarctic Legacy Project takes shape,” *University World News* (13 October 2011).

<sup>65</sup> As Lance van Sittert described working on the History of Marine Animal Populations (HMAP) dimension of the Census of Marine Life, an interdisciplinary venture gravitating more towards the natural sciences than the humanities and social science aspects. The ALP was focussed more on the humanities dimension although an important part included repeat-photography to trace ecosystem change. See Lance van Sittert, “Anniversary Forum: The Other Seven Tenths,” *Environmental History* 10, 1 (2005). Available at <http://www.historycooperative.org>. (Accessed 15 August 2009).

<sup>66</sup> M. Reuss “Historians, Historical Analysis, and International Water Politics,” *The Public Historian* 26, 1 (Winter 2004), 65–80.

archive building with people from different disciplinary backgrounds. It could be argued that, when conscious of divergent views, these varying approaches can actually augment research. Listening to participants' views on polar history and their place in it do not only reveal useful facts that are not readily available, but also give insight into the meanings that were attached to these places, which was particularly useful in chapters five and six of this dissertation. It also proved invaluable in gaining insight into some of the technicalities underlying Antarctic activity that could otherwise have been missed. Working with people from different disciplinary backgrounds sometimes led to conflicting ideas on how to go about searching for sources, what constituted 'good' historical sources and sufficient provenance. In other instances the dissimilitude could be transformed into creativity, opening up sources that would otherwise not have been considered.

The project was launched within an academic community, specifically a natural science department, and subsequently the first port of call was scientists and policy-makers. Although few professionals involved in Antarctica actually believe the myth that it is 'a continent for science', with strict environmental protocols that have been saved from the politics of the more permanently inhabited world, the importance of science and scientists should not be disregarded out of hand. The relationship between politicians and scientists has often been and still is reciprocal. In South Africa, individual scientists have been especially mobile in moving between the spheres of academia and politics, lobbying for policies that would further their own scientific agendas. Tracing their words and input into the tangible textual archival sources, the agenda, minutes and memoranda that historians feel comfortable with, bear testimony to this. These sources are essential to understand the history of Antarctica behind the desks and in the boardrooms of the powerbrokers and decision-makers.

Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic Islands, however, were not just engaged with in the abstract and on paper. There was and still is also a human element to visiting and working on Antarctica and the Islands. They are fashioned as vast natural laboratories, and for work done within the laboratories at the research base, support - from the science equipment to food and shelter - has to be transported there from elsewhere. As William Fox put it in his book *Terra Antarctica*, Antarctica is a place that 'precisely because it is so difficult to see it, allows us to examine more closely the nature not only of land, but of ourselves.'<sup>67</sup> Fox was referring to the metaphorical seeing of the Antarctic landscape in particular. He also referred to how, on a

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<sup>67</sup> Fox, *Terra Antarctica*, 276.

very basic level, Antarctica (and in a modern context the sub-Antarctic) is difficult to see because its environment necessitates a proportionately vast and intricate logistic operation. Although Antarctica is governed by a high-level international Treaty and science is its currency, scientists and diplomats do not make out most of Antarctica's people. As chapter six makes clear, engineers, ships' officers, administrative staff, chaplains, engineers, pilots, doctors, construction workers, stewards, boatswains, chippies and deckhands are all necessary to facilitate the research and presence in this environment. Neither did every group nor individual necessarily experience the environment the same way, nor can one pinpoint a normative role to 'nature.' The historian wanting to delve into the more visceral experience of encountering the Antarctic and the sub-Antarctic needs to look at more personal sources, diaries, memoirs, letters, fiction or even photos. Of these, one diary and one work of fiction have been published by overwinterers, one memoir by a ships' captain and two travelogues by journalists.<sup>68</sup> There has been no central repository for unpublished sources and the published sources are, as noted, scant and thinly spread. Yet, cumulatively, South Africans have spent roughly 160 winters on Antarctica and the Islands. The Antarctic Legacy Project was therefore the proverbial treasure hunt for these lost gems that could perhaps give a glimpse into the personal experiences of a variety of people.

### ***Oral history and private collections***

One of the major objectives of the ALP was recording oral histories of South Africans who had been involved in the country's national Antarctic programme. There are a number of reasons why these oral histories were valuable. The first, as mentioned above, was the way in which such oral histories could provide a window into the personal encounter with the Islands and Antarctica, especially of the natural environment which one would presume to have been central to people's experience of the place. Some interviewees also gave the ALP access to their diaries and this could then be corroborated. One of the pitfalls of oral history is after all its reliance on memory, teleological reconstruction and presentist concerns. A team member who had been to SANAE in the 1960s' memory may well be influenced by National Geographic documentaries of the 2000s.

In some instances, oral histories also revealed in fact how not everyone has been influenced by dominant discourse. It forces one to look also at one's own assumptions as someone

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<sup>68</sup> Van der Merwe *Wit Horison*; Dries Brunt *Dagboek van 'n Eensame* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003) K.T McNish *The Eternal Ice* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1971); J.H Marsh, *No Pathway Here* and Don Pinnock *Blue Ice: Travels in Antarctica* (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2005).

informed by having read on the subject and coming from a particular socio-cultural background. An example of this was when two helicopter technicians, highly skilled but not necessarily highly educated, was asked how they saw ‘wilderness.’ They proceeded elaborating on the eponymous Garden Route town. As I listened to their answer, I contemplated on whether to rephrase my question, but could not quickly think of another idiom. This and other similar answers made it clear that not everyone going to Antarctica see it in terms of ‘wilderness,’ in that sense. It is certainly not a universal concept, as also demonstrated in chapter six.

Speaking to high-profile scientists and bureaucrats required a different approach. Oral history handbooks, especially in the South African context, often work from the premise that the interviews are conducted with ‘ordinary people’, semi-literate people or the ‘voiceless’. Scientists, as Charles Weiner remarked, ‘seem to have an audible voice, and they have not lacked access to power or influence.’<sup>69</sup> Scientists also leave vast paper trails in the form of (impersonal) journal articles and books. In South Africa, pickings are meagre when it comes to scientific memoirs, biographies or archived elite oral histories.<sup>70</sup> Oral history, however, provides a means to learn more about scientists’ motivations and ‘what it means to “do science.”’<sup>71</sup> Mott Greene made the point that oral history interviews have the potential to illuminate what ‘goes without saying’ within scientific communities.<sup>72</sup> In the unique laboratory spaces of Antarctica and the Islands, these forms of tacit knowledge can be easily lost to those who wish to situate them in a much broader context.

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<sup>69</sup> Charles Weiner, “Oral History of Science: A Mushrooming Cloud?” *The Journal of American History*, 75, 2 (September 1988), 548–559.

<sup>70</sup> Almost all oral history projects in South Africa, especially post-Apartheid, focus on ‘giving a voice to the voiceless’ and addressing inequalities in historical presentation. Given South African history, the prioritisation of advocacy-led oral history ‘from below’ is understandable. Moreover, most South Africans hail from cultural backgrounds with stronger oral than written traditions. Historiographical debates on oral history focused on questions about memory, healing, oral history and heritage, archiving and the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, but working from the premise that oral history interviews are only conducted with ‘ordinary’ people, rural people, repressed and marginalised people and those who were in the Struggle. See for example Sean Field, “Introduction: Approaching Oral History at the Centre for Popular Memory,” *South African Historical Journal* 60, 2 (2008), 169-174; Sean Field “Turning up the Volume: Dialogues about Memory Create Oral Histories,” *South African Historical Journal* 60, 2 (2008), 175-194 and Philippe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane, *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Interviewing in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2008). Interviews with people at the other side of the spectrum, or the lack thereof, are barely mentioned. There is a case to be made to include scientist and other elite, especially when considering the state of the archives and the fact that major role players in South Africa’s past, especially those involved in the military-industrial complex have emigrated and are retiring. Individual historians have conducted interviews, but these are almost always held privately.

<sup>71</sup> Charles Weiner, “Oral History of Science”, 548–559.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted by Ronald E. Doel, “Oral History of American Science: A Forty Year Review,” *History of Science* 41 (2003), 358.

Combining oral history with collecting notebooks, letters and diaries can also provide insight into scientists' institutional relationships.<sup>73</sup> These relationships were often important in high-level decision making, especially the context of the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic, where the scientific community is small and where their relationship with and support by the state carry unique political meaning.

As for the interviewing process, the advice given by celebrated interviewer Studs Terkel rings true for ordinary and elite interviewees alike: 'The first thing is ... "Listen." It's the second thing...too, and the third, and the fourth. "Listen...listen...listen...listen."' <sup>74</sup> Other guidelines, such as asking open-ended questions and double checking recording equipment beforehand, also apply. Some subject specific challenges remain. Scientists often have had previous experiences of being interviewed, notably by the media. As Thomas Kuhn noted, it can be 'very difficult to break the pattern set by previous official reminiscences and recapture the fresh and circumstantial memories that once lay behind them.'<sup>75</sup> Although some questions revolved around clarifying certain facts, oral history, as Alessandro Portelli is often quoted saying, 'tells us less about the *events* than their *meaning*... Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing and what they now think they did.'<sup>76</sup> This was also an important goal behind interviewing past and present directors behind the SANAP programme on, for example, questions of gender equality.

The vast majority of people interviewed were, however, those who did not necessarily make a career of Antarctica and the Islands, the radio-operators, technicians, engineers, medics or field assistants who went to a research base for a year and returned. The foot soldiers of sub-Antarctic science and politics, the 'ordinary people,' who became extraordinary for a little while, by actually living on and seeing places that only a very tiny fraction of the human population ever see. For at least the first four decades, only white men were allowed to overwinter. Like Mmantho Nkotsoe, Belinda Bozzoli's assistant on *Women of Phokeng*, I was aware of my own 'insider' status that could resonate culturally with many of these interviewees – I am Afrikaans, from the rural Free State and a minister's daughter used to polite small talk and the rites of tea and biscuits. It was more difficult to trace ships' crew

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<sup>73</sup> Weiner, "Oral History of Science," 548–559.

<sup>74</sup> Studs Terkel, with Tony Parker, "Interviewing an Interviewer" in Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson, eds, *The Oral History Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 121. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted by Ronald E. Doel "Oral History of American Science," 349.

<sup>76</sup> Alessandro Portelli "What Makes Oral History Different" in Perks and Thompson, eds, *The Oral History Reader*, 36. Emphasis in the original.

who were mostly coloured and those we could find usually became involved in the 1980s and found their way again and again to the ship. In this context, actually going to the Islands and to Antarctica was a means of easier access as one could converse with the crew on the ship when suitable.

Photos, when accompanied by sufficient metadata, can also be valuable sources. A photo of an old sealer's hut and the artefacts they contain can for instance provide clues as to the daily lives and the leisure activities of sealers. One picture, for instance, contained two tattered penny novels.<sup>77</sup> The poses struck by cat-hunters in chapter five are revealing of a particular masculine 'pioneer' trope and then there is the ubiquitous 'posing with penguins' pictures conveying ownership, anthropomorphism but also humour. In Antarctica, its extreme nature adds an extra dimension. It is, as Fox suggested, a desert that challenges human perception to the extent that it can cause cognitive and visual dissonance, on a physical, evolutionary level, but also in terms of imaging and imagining Antarctica: 'Comparing the experiential reality of the Antarctic with our images of it, and assessing the kinds of dissonance we suffer in that environment, make it possible also to understand how people construct stories about an extreme space in order to convert it into place.'<sup>78</sup> Here Fox was referring to artists that visited Antarctica on official programmes, but perhaps the same can also be said of the snapshots people took, when they were not consciously interpreting the Antarctic environment.

### **Archives**

Archival sources formed the bedrock of this dissertation. Halfway through the research process I was granted early access to the database being built at UCT. The database contained digitised copies of all the inventoried documents in the National Archives in Pretoria that associated with Antarctica, the sub-Antarctic Islands, whaling, sealing and other related keywords. It would be foolish to complain about such a luxury, although one has to be cognisant about the potential problems. It can be tempting, for example, to 'cherry-pick' documents, or to include too many mundane details just because they have been found. Moreover, the South African Archives have a significant cataloguing backlog, which has been further compounded by a shortage of skills and shelf space. Many documents that should have been declassified are therefore not available. Partly due to this, some file series had been retained at the individual government departments. The Department of International

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<sup>77</sup> Personal communication, John Cooper (3 May 2011).

<sup>78</sup> Fox, *Terra Antarctica*.

Relations and Cooperation still holds many of the file series on Antarctica, although these were theoretically accessible. A lack of clarity with regards to the rules of access (and a resurgence of seurocratic paranoia) meant that my research time in these archives was cut short when my camera was confiscated. Fortunately, the misunderstandings were ironed out and the UCT project has started digitising these sources as well.

Documents generated by the Department of External Affairs (later Foreign Affairs) dominate the dissertation, especially from the mid-1950s onwards. It was, however, the Department of Transport and later Environmental Affairs that were largely responsible for the management of South Africa's research stations on the Islands and Antarctica. These documents were moved from the Department of Transport to Environmental Affairs when the responsibility for the programme moved. Requests by me (and other researchers) for access to these documents have been repeatedly stone-walled. The reasons behind this were varied, but essentially came down to internal departmental politics. Thus a great deal of valuable documents such as team leaders' reports, and minutes of meetings could not (and still cannot) be consulted. The subsequent reliance on series produced by the Department of Foreign Affairs can potentially lead to an overemphasis on international relations. Nevertheless, it must also be mentioned, however, that the Department of Environmental Affairs' Directorate: Antarctica and Islands have otherwise been very helpful, especially in facilitating two field visits, one to the research base on Marion Island, and one to the research base on Antarctica.

### ***Visiting Antarctica and Marion Island***

Donald Worster famously said of environmental historians that 'it is time we bought a good set of walking shoes, and we cannot avoid getting some mud on them.'<sup>79</sup> Or in this case, snow, or mire water. The openness to new fields of inquiry from the side of SANAP and the NRF, together with the academic support from the CIB, gave me the opportunity to visit both Marion Island and the South African base at Antarctica. Numerous personal and professional factors influenced my decision to conduct the field work and well as my experience of both these visits. Not all of these experiences can necessarily be translated to broader conclusions about the salience of field work in history, but having visited was undeniably a meaningful experience.

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<sup>79</sup> Donald Worster, "Appendix: Doing Environmental History," in Donald Worster, ed, *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 289.

Adrian Howkins pointed out how visiting the places one writes about confers a sense of legitimacy, a sense extreme environments highlight.<sup>80</sup> ‘By the simple act of going to the places we write about,’ he wrote ‘we are presumed to have a certain authority over them.’<sup>81</sup> As Howkins also experienced, it was often the first question people asked me when I told them about my dissertation topic. I soon realised there are different grades of ‘having been there’ conveying different degrees of authority. This was illustrated to me quite literally by the frequency that people I travelled with, in the immediacy of that logistic operation, would question bureaucrats’ ability to make decisions because they have not ‘overwintered’. Albeit much less frequently, some people also put it to me that I will only be able to write a ‘true history’ of the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic experience if I have overwintered myself.

Practically, probably one of the most useful outcomes of participant observation on these research bases was learning the language. To put it in context, I was asked disturbingly often about the language people speak on Marion Island and Antarctica, as if there was some kind of indigenous population. But, in fact, there are ‘Islanders’ and ‘Antarcticans’ who see themselves as a kind of indigenous population, returning year after year. There is a language, where words such as *nunatak*, *sastrugi*, *scoria cone*, *tropicalus* and *gazella* are not limited to scientific articles but part of everyday conversation.<sup>82</sup> There are neologisms such as *metkassie* and *Potchkassie* and the word *sealer* paradoxically denotes a field scientist working with seals, rather than someone exploiting seals for oil. An ability to speak this ‘language’ eased access into the Antarctic’s world.<sup>83</sup>

People tend to remember only the highlights and low points – it takes visiting to experience the routine, to see how a winter might easily become boring for more passive personalities, how the actual landscape of Antarctica might lose its meaning and awe. To see how one can gain weight in the sedentary comfort of a ship, with three full-course meals a day and how tensions can arise between base-bound personnel and field scientists. It was also a means to see artefacts, souvenirs, log-books and visitors book many of which are self-evident to the people who have been there, not something they would think to relate. On both the research bases, the way in which people lived themselves into the environment, creating archives out

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<sup>80</sup> Howkins “‘Have you been there?’” 515.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> A *nunatak* is a rocky outcrop in Antarctica, *sastrugi* the hard and wave like accumulation of snow, a *scoria cone* a hill of gravely volcanic rock. *Arctocephalus gazella* and *Arctocephalus tropicalus* are species of fur seal.

<sup>83</sup> There is even an Antarctic English dictionary. Bernadette Hince, *The Antarctic Dictionary: A Complete Guide to Antarctic English* (Melbourne: CSIRO, 2000).

of the buildings themselves, and the way they chose to commemorate their having been there can provide useful food for thought.

Visiting, however, should however not be taken for granted. One of the potential hazards 'is the assumption that our personal experiences of going there might be assumed to be universal.'<sup>84</sup> The material gathered are often not tangible and should be grounded in empirical research.

## Structure and chapters

Probably the most challenging aspect of writing a history of South Africa's involvement in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic was the absence of an extensive pre-existing narrative on which to draw. The existing articles and thesis that cover the same period as this dissertation provided an unstable scaffolding, with only the works by Dodds providing a foundation on which to build. A thematic analysis had to be balanced with a chronological account. There was no Stephen-Murray Smith, Stephen Martin, Malcolm Templeton or Dian Belanger to refer a reader to in a footnote.<sup>85</sup> The intention was not to write an exhaustive account of South Africa's Antarctic and sub-Antarctic activities. Still, the story of South Africa's involvement in the sub-Antarctic and the Antarctic also had to be told for the first time. When giving a descriptive, chronological narrative, it is easy to get lost in minutiae and lose sight of larger themes. However, combining thematic and chronological approaches can lead to a rather confusing, achronological narrative, which will be especially disorientating in the case of South Africa's Antarctic history as it lacks a well-known narrative. This dissertation was therefore divided into two parts, part one tracing a chronological history of why and how South Africa became involved in the area and part two a thematic account of particular aspects of science and the environment in this history. The area covered is vast, literally and figuratively, and there remain many different angles to be taken and narratives to be written by scholars working on South Africa's polar histories, which they will hopefully do. But to

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<sup>84</sup> Howkins, "“Have you been there?”", 517.

<sup>85</sup> Stephen Murray-Smith, *Sitting on Penguins: People and Politics in Australian Antarctica* (Sydney: Hutchinson, 1988); M. Templeton, *A Wise adventure: New Zealand in Antarctica, 1920–1960* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2000); Stephen Martin, *A History of Antarctica* (Sydney: State Library of NSW Press, 1996); Dian Olson Belanger, *Deep Freeze: the United States, the International Geophysical Year, and the origins of Antarctica's age of science* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2006); Malcolm Templeton, *A wise adventure: New Zealand in Antarctica, 1920-1960* (Wellington. [N.Z.]: Victoria University Press, 2000)

echo Stephan-Murray Smith on Australian Antarctic history, not just one history needs to be written but ‘preferably several, or at least a history that will provoke debate.’<sup>86</sup>

Simply put, this dissertation seeks to answer two related questions. The first question was once put to a Norwegian whaling captain (elaborated on in chapter one): ‘My friends in South Africa ask me, why do you go down there?’ This dissertation traces the different answers to that question and the variety of factors that informed them. The second question asks what its involvement in Antarctica and the Islands, explicitly couched in terms of science and the environment, reveal about South Africa?

The first four chapters, as mentioned, follow chronologically. Chapter one opens with the first attempts by scientists and explorers to involve South Africa, as a nation-state, in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic at the end of the First World War. It considers why these proposals were tabled and what their failure revealed about South Africa’s limitations as a southern frontier state. It traces the beginnings of a South African Antarctic policy, including the role played by the scientific investigations of the whaling industry and meteorology.

The second chapter covers the decade following the Second World War. It starts with South Africa’s occupation of the Prince Edward Islands in 1947 and 1948, a turning point in South Africa’s Antarctic history. During this decade, South Africa’s domestic political situation and its position in the international politics was still fluid. The regime change in 1948 heralded apartheid, but apartheid’s meaning was still unclear. South Africa’s ties to the British Empire were increasingly strained but not broken. South Africa had territorial designs on South West Africa and the protectorates, but the country was increasingly anti-imperialist in rhetoric following its participation in the Second World War alongside the Allies. Technologies forged during the War eradicated distances bringing the new enemy, Soviet Russia, ever closer. There was a new geopolitical awareness with regard to Antarctica and the Islands, and South Africa’s activities in Antarctica and the Islands started to gather momentum.

As chapter three explains, in 1955 South Africa publically announced that it too had a stake in the Antarctic continent. During the next five years, South Africa desperately sought to legitimize this interest. A South African meteorologist was sent on a Commonwealth expedition to Antarctica. South Africa also partook in the sub-Antarctic leg of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957–1958. It was during the IGY that science

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<sup>86</sup> Murray-Smith, *Sitting on Penguins* quoted in Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence*, 3.

became entrenched as one of the main currencies of Antarctic politics. In order not to be excluded from what was fast becoming an exclusive 'Antarctic Club', South Africa permanently 'borrowed' a station from Oslo on Norway's Antarctic claim. South Africa became one of the twelve original signatories of the Antarctic Treaty, which evolved into a system that still governs it today. During this period, the Cold War was never far from the Cold Continent. The third chapter then also seeks to assess how much South Africa's involvement with the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic had to do with events in the northern hemisphere as well as the south.

The Antarctic Treaty went into force in 1961. That same year, South Africa left the Commonwealth. The fourth chapter looks at the three decades during which South Africa was an internationally isolated state. The Antarctic Treaty System was one of the most prestigious multilateral regimes to which South Africa had access. This was partly because science was the currency, and they argued that science was non-political. This was also a period during which Antarctic and sub-Antarctic resources, including the resources of the Southern Ocean, drew the world's attention south. The chapter includes the signing of the Madrid Protocol which codified the environment as (ostensibly) the central factor in Antarctic governance. It ends in the mid-1990s, when a new, democratically elected government had to decide if the (expensive) scientific programmes on Antarctica and the Prince Edward Islands were worthwhile in the new dispensation.

Chapters five and six are thematic. Chapter five looks at the Prince Edward Islands through the lens of 'wilderness' and how the value of the Prince Edward Islands as a 'wilderness' has changed between its occupation in 1947 and 1995, when the island group was declared a Special Nature Reserve. Chapter six is an account of South Africa's Antarcticans, the people who had to be the scientific presence on Antarctica. It is followed by key conclusions.

This dissertation will endeavour to show how, by warming up to the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic, we can also learn something about South Africa as a northern neighbour. The periphery can offer a lens into the centre.

## Chapter 1

# Weather, Whales and War: South Africa in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic 1919 – c.1946

### Introduction

There is no landmass but a few volcanic outcrops between Cape Town, South Africa's 'mother city', and its frigid neighbour, Antarctica. Indeed, many an Antarctic expedition leader remembered watching Table Mountain recede on the horizon as his vessel, laden with fresh produce from the Cape, headed south.<sup>1</sup> Yet, apart from a few men with professional ties to South Africa, it was not until 1919 that a *South African* expedition was first proposed.<sup>2</sup> Almost three decades later, the Union of South Africa laid claim to the sub-Antarctic Prince Edward Islands.<sup>3</sup> It took a further twelve years for a South African National Antarctic Expedition to reach the Ice.<sup>4</sup>

Although South Africa's response in an era of increasing international attention towards the Antarctic may be considered lethargic, it did, however, exhibit interest prior to the occupation of the Prince Edward Islands in 1947–1948. At times, events such as Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1914–1917) led to a groundswell in general public interest, but it usually ebbed away quietly.<sup>5</sup> A number of individuals among South Africa's intellectual elite tried to draw attention to the potential scientific significance of Antarctica and the islands.<sup>6</sup> South Africans also participated in some of the economic activities, including whaling,

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1 For a summary of the expeditions that set forth from South Africa during the so-called 'Heroic Age' (including Scott's last expedition), see John Cooper and Robert K Headland, "A History of South African Involvement in Antarctica and at the Prince Edward Islands," *South African Journal of Antarctic Research* 21, 2 (1991), 77–91. These expeditions were invariably led by males.

2 John Cooper and Tom Avery, "Historical Sites at the Prince Edward Islands," *South African National Science Committee Progress Report* 128 (1986), 1–82.

3 The modern nation state of South Africa was formed in 1910. It was a Union from 1910 until 1961 when it became a Republic. Until the 1950s, it was often referred by the shorthand 'the Union' in correspondence, in the same way Australia was referred to as 'the Commonwealth.' These terms, and their shorthands, obviously carry political weight. In the first three chapters, both appellations will be used.

4 A "South African Expedition" would be one either officially endorsed by the South African government and/or one funded and led by South Africans. A third of South Africa's first expedition team consisted of Dutch and German citizens.

5 The expedition itself was unsuccessful. Nevertheless, it became known as the last great heroic polar feat, described as 'legendary' and 'epic.' Shackleton and his men of the *Endurance* famously survived two years marooned on the ice. Ernest Shackleton, *South: The Endurance Expedition* (London: W Heinemann, 1919).

6 When reference is made to Antarctica and the Islands, it includes the following: the continent, the islands and island groups immediately surrounding it and the sub-Antarctic islands falling under SCAR. It may also, when relevant, include Tristan de Cunha. These terms and definitions are elaborated upon in the introduction.

sealing<sup>7</sup> and attempts at collecting guano.<sup>8</sup> Its harbours and shore-based whaling stations made South Africa a role player in Southern Hemisphere whaling operations in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. It also linked South Africa to the British *Discovery* investigations, investigations closely linked with that country's Antarctic interests.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the whaling industry was dominated by Britain and Norway. By the 1920s, the whaling industry's most profitable fields were in the Southern Hemisphere.<sup>10</sup> The Norwegians and the British controlled whaling in this area and the Anglo-Norwegian dynamic in the whaling industry was closely interleaved with the territorial and political pursuits of these two countries in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic region. Another, less tangible but critical reason why Britain featured prominently in the Union's relationship with the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic was the Unions' position as one of the white-dominated, 'civilised' countries in the British Empire.<sup>11</sup> The Union was a role player in strategies of British imperial dominance as well as its decline in the aftermath of the Second World War.

It should be noted that the era under discussion has received analysis from other scholars. Renè Laverde adopted a political focus.<sup>12</sup> He wrote a fine, descriptive narrative based on internal correspondence around a South African Antarctic policy. As mentioned in the introduction, he was hampered by a lack of access to sources and only in his last chapter did he attempt to situate the Antarctic policy in a broader context.<sup>13</sup> Laverde also made little mention of the sub-Antarctic, which I argue throughout this dissertation, has been

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<sup>7</sup> See Thierry J.M Rousset, "‘Might is Right’: A Study of the Cape Town/Crozets elephant seal oil trade (1832-1869)" (MA thesis, University of Cape Town, Cape Town 2011).

<sup>8</sup> In February 1908 W.B Newton was given a 21 year lease for the Prince Edward Islands to remove guano from the island. See: Earl of Crewe to P.A. Myburgh Cloete, 30 November 1909, KAB GH 23/125. The island was also visited by the Southern Sealing Company in 1909. They requested the Cape Colony to annex the islands to safeguard them from Norwegian exploitation. See G.D. Irvin to Sir W. Hely Hutchinson, 22 July 1909, KAB GH 23/125. The Kerguelen Sealing and Whaling Company obtained the lease from Newton in 1926 and the British government extended it by ten years. It was, however, terminated in 1934 upon request of the company. See Mr O.E.S. Lloyd to Mr Martin, March 1946, TNA CO 78/219/8.

<sup>9</sup> Klaus Dodds, *Pink Ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002); Arne Tønnessen and R.I. Christophersen, *The history of modern whaling* (London: C. Hurst & Co. 1982); 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, 3 (1983), 448–461.

<sup>10</sup> C. de Jong, "A History of Whaling from Durban" in Bill Guest and J.M Sellers, eds, *Receded Tides of Empire: Aspects of the Economic and Social History of Natal and Zululand since 1910*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1994), 113.

<sup>11</sup> The British Empire was deeply hierarchical – by 1926 the white dominated settler colonies were declared Dominions with more 'freedom' than the colonies (such as Kenya) or protectorates (like Lesotho).

<sup>12</sup> Renè Laverde, "The Development, Pursuit and Maintenance of a South African Antarctic Policy: 1926-1988," (MA thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> As discussed in the Introduction, access to secondary material in South Africa has not really improved, even with the help of the internet.

inextricably linked to South African involvement in the Antarctic, not least because from the outset they were grouped under the same government departments. Allan P. Berman, John Cooper and Thomas Avery; John Cooper and Robert Headland and Steven Chown and Christine Hänel and John Viall have written descriptive articles, drawing overwhelmingly on secondary source material and containing little in the way of historical analysis.<sup>14</sup> Klaus Dodds, in his work on the geopolitics of Antarctica, produced the only academically astute accounts of South Africa's involvement in Antarctica. His scope included the critical-geopolitics of Empire as such and therefore he made use of documents in archives from Canada as well as Britain and South Africa. However, his wide lens necessitated generalisation with South Africa being a subsection of a broader project.<sup>15</sup>

This chapter then, offers a more detailed history of South African involvement in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic that takes into account both the South African context, as well as international developments.<sup>16</sup>

It will start with a description of how the sub-Antarctic and the Antarctic were mapped in relation to South Africa and the world, as it is imperative to understand this particular geography. It will then chronologically trace certain nodal points in this history, highlighting the recurring undercurrents of first, meteorology and other earth sciences, second, whales and whaling and third, the Empire. It will also explore the role played by World Wars. These were, of course amorphous and fluid, rather than parallel or linear developments. Lastly, the successive Union governments during this period paid scant attention to developments in the Antarctic. The Union certainly was much less involved than other Dominion governments or Whitehall. It is thus also a history of uninterest from the South African government and public, only occasionally steering according to any strategy, be it political, scientific or economic. Possible reasons behind this seemingly enervated drift are also pointed out.

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<sup>14</sup> It should also be noted that none of these authors are historians, with only Avery, an archaeologist and Allan Berman, whose paper formed part of his honours requirements for political science, coming from the social sciences and humanities. Allan Peter Berman, "South Africa and the Antarctic: The International Aspect," (Honours Thesis, Johannesburg, WITS University, 1988) Cooper and Avery, "Historical Sites at the Prince Edward Islands", Cooper and Headland, "A History of South African Involvement"; Christine Hänel and Steven Chown, *An Introductory Guide to the Marion and Prince Edward Islands Special Nature Reserves 50 Years after Annexation*. (Pretoria: Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 1998). John Viall, "South Africa: The Road to the Antarctic Treaty," *South African Journal of Antarctic Research*, 21, 2 (1991), 125–28.

<sup>15</sup> Klaus Dodds, "South Africa and the Antarctic" *Polar Record* 32, 180 (1996), 25-42 and Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics in Antarctica: Views from the Southern Oceanic Rim* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1997), chapter 8.

<sup>16</sup> It should be remembered that, at this time, South Africa was a much less isolated country than would become the case after the 1948 victory of the National Party.

## The 'South African sector'

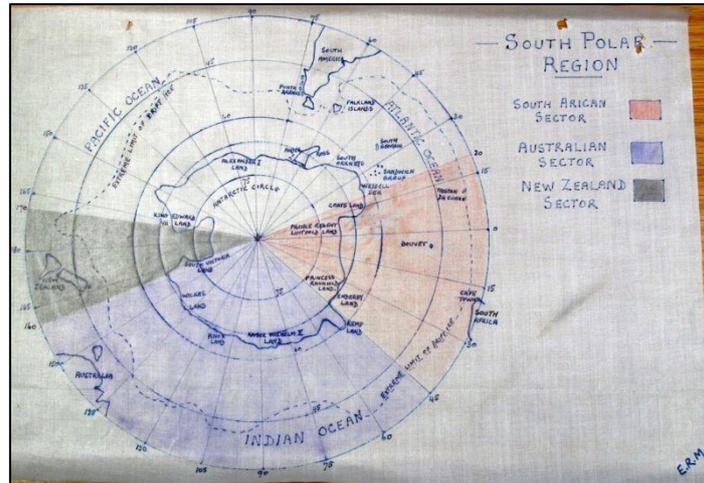


Figure 1.1: A 1939 sketch drawing of the South Polar Region showing the part considered to be the 'South African sector'

Source: (SAB HEN 2491/455 vol. 1)

It is important to understand the lie of the land, sea and ice in this history and how they were depicted on the maps upon which the boundaries were drawn. Maps are not neutral or organic representations of an objective reality.<sup>17</sup> In terms of world maps, Antarctica and the islands occupy an idiosyncratic position. It is a map different from the classic Mercator projection, (with Antarctica often left out). Maps of Antarctica were usually drawn using azimuthal equal area projections, with Antarctica in the middle and the southern continents arranged around it.<sup>18</sup> The islands, not included on most world-maps due to their diminutive size, form what Bernadette Hince called 'a necklace' around the Antarctic continent.<sup>19</sup> Maps were commonly used when determining under whose jurisdiction small islands and expanses of ice fell. So, for instance, a British official remarked that Britain's claim to the Prince Edward Islands was

<sup>17</sup> Scholarship on maps as social constructions is extensive, popularised by J.B Harley, "Deconstructing the Map," *Cartographica* 26 (1989):1-20. Also see J. W Crompton, "Maps as social constructions: power, communication and visualization," *Progress in Human Geography* 25, 2 (2001), 236. Klaus Dodds raised the point, for instance, that Britain literally wanted Antarctica to be coloured the same pink of empire than its other territories. Klaus Dodds, *Pink Ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> These projections were usually used for maps where the correct showing of the area as well as the accurate direction from a given central point to any other point was important. "Map Projections: From Spherical Earth to Flat Map" [http://www.nationalatlas.gov/articles/mapping/a\\_projections.html](http://www.nationalatlas.gov/articles/mapping/a_projections.html) (Accessed 24 July 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Bernadette Hince, "Teeth in the wind: an environmental history of the sub-Antarctic Islands," (PhD dissertation, Australian National University, Canberra, 2006).

spurious, because ‘they are not underlined in red in the maps in the Colonial Office list or the *Times* atlas.’<sup>20</sup>

Maps were also used by decision-makers to spatially orientate their nation states with regards to Antarctica. Antarctica was commonly presented with the geographic South Pole as the central point and ‘sectors’ radiating outwards towards the globe. The ‘South African sector’ of the Antarctic was an appellation, mostly found in South African and some British documents, which referred to the area between Enderby Land and Coats Land, an area that corresponds with a polar projection towards the eastern and western coasts of South Africa.<sup>21</sup> This sector included the ‘bleak and inhospitable’ Bouvet Island, which was thought to hold great potential for South Africa as well as for southern ocean whaling industries as a meteorological station.<sup>22</sup> It also included the Prince Edward Islands, a profitable sealing ground in the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> The label ‘South African sector’ was not only based on geographical contiguity, but was also used as a marker of territory. It fell into disuse when most of the ‘South African sector’ was brought under Norwegian sovereignty on the eve of war in January 1939.<sup>24</sup> Directly west of this sector, in what was known as the British Falkland Islands Dependencies, was the Weddell Coast, which was considered geologically important for South Africa in terms of the theory of continental drift (or ‘wandering continents’).<sup>25</sup> South Africa’s stake in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic mostly corresponded with these lands and the seas and ice between.

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<sup>20</sup> T.R. Parsons to Foreign Office, 8 August 1934, TNA CO 78/197/13. Apparently, they were underlined in red in the Dominion’s Office list.

<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to note that even today the literature often refer to the surrounding continents as South America, Australia and South Africa (as opposed to Africa or southern Africa).

<sup>22</sup> “An Island of Mystery,” *Cape Times* (23 January 1929).

<sup>23</sup> Jaco Boshoff, and J.A. van Schalkwyk, “The Archaeology of Sealing Sites on Marion Island,” (Cape Town Pretoria: South African Maritime Museum National Cultural History Museum, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> Copy of Proclamation of Occupation by King Haakon of Norway, 14 January 1939, SAB BTS 102/2/1 Vol 1. The area claimed extended from ‘the limits of the Falkland Islands Dependencies in the West (the boundary of Coats Land) to the limits of the Australian Antarctic Dependency in the East (45° E) with the land lying within this coast and the enviroing sea’. The northern extent of the claim was unspecified.

<sup>25</sup> The theory, proposed by Alfred Wegener in 1915 found its most ardent Anglophone supporter in the South African geologist, Aleksander L. du Toit who wrote *Our Wandering Continents: An Hypothesis of Continental Drifting* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1937). The ensuing debate has been used as a case study in the philosophy and history of science ever since. J.A Stewart, *Drifting Continents, Colliding Paradigms* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 39.

## Meteorological potential of the Antarctic regions 1919–1925

South Africa had a stake in the sealing activities in the sub-Antarctic since the nineteenth century, and the whaling industry since 1908. It was, however, only in 1919 that the first proposals in South Africa were made linking Antarctica and the islands to a more public good. And few phenomena were more public than the weather.

The potential weather stations on Antarctica and the surrounding islands held for forecasting was frequently advocated by scientists, prospective expedition leaders and some policy-makers as one of the major reasons why South Africa should be formally and permanently involved in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic. In the South African context it was assumed that meteorology, in particular its applications to agriculture, would have economic, cultural and political resonance. A large segment of the population (both African and white) was involved in rural activities, and the white farming community formed an especially dominant cultural and political entity.<sup>26</sup> South Africa is also a mainly semi-arid country with frequent droughts, which was an ever-present threat to agriculture.<sup>27</sup> Drought had an economic value attached to it and was a serious political issue.<sup>28</sup> Meteorologist, agriculturalists and policy-makers hoped that long-term forecasting, facilitated by weather stations in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic would go some way to help farmers plan accordingly and thus reduce the associated risks.<sup>29</sup>

As a science, synoptic meteorology was dependent on analysing data taken near simultaneously from different geographical locations. Advancements in radio communication and wireless telegraphy systems afforded the efficient coordination and correlation of

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<sup>26</sup> There are many works discussing this. Many politicians also had ties to the *platteland*. See, for example, William Beinart, *Twentieth Century South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), chapters 2 and 5; H. Giliomee, *Die Afrikaners: 'n Biografie* (Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 2004), 306-364 and C.W.A de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941).

<sup>27</sup> The Meteorological Office of the Union of South Africa was established in 1912 as a branch of the Department of Irrigation. See S.P Jackson, "Meteorology and Climatology," A.C Brown, *A History of Scientific Endeavour in South Africa* (Cape Town: Royal Society of South Africa, 1977), 397. Its location at the Department of Irrigation is indicative of the purpose the state attached to a meteorological office – water as a resource generally but specifically agriculture. After the Second World War it was reorganised under the Department of Transport.

<sup>28</sup> S.M.E van der Watt, "'It is Drought, Locusts, Depression... and the Lord knows what else:' a socio-environmental history of white agriculture in the Union of South Africa, with reference to the Orange Free State, c. 1920-1950," (MA thesis, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, 2009), especially chapter 5. William Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock and the Environment 1770-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) and De Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa*.

<sup>29</sup> "The Economic Value of Antarctic Meteorology to Agriculturalists of Australasia," undated, 1920, BPRC Hubert Wilkins Collection 127/14/3. "S.A.'s Droughts Come from the South Pole," *Libertas*, (July 1944), 18–27; "New Territory for the Union?" *The Automobile*, (May 1931), 72.

meteorological data.<sup>30</sup> It was not only a recurrent theme in proposals for South African expeditions to the Antarctic, but also actively pursued in Australian, Chilean and Argentine Antarctic Expeditions.<sup>31</sup> On the whole, synoptic meteorology was a science that could only be practised effectively with international cooperation and as such it was a science eminently suited to Antarctic geopolitics and the discourse of international government.<sup>32</sup>

Southern hemispheric cooperation became a more salient and wide-spread call as the science and practice of meteorology evolved and the Bergen school of meteorology became entrenched. The Bergen school of meteorology was a new conceptual foundation for atmospheric science. Following the First World War, and largely shaped by it, it was established by a group of Scandinavian meteorologists, under the leadership of Vilhelm Bjerknes (1862–1951).<sup>33</sup> One of the key concepts of the Bergen school was an ‘air-mass-and-front analyses.’<sup>34</sup> The concept itself was initially applied to the northern temperate zones. It was constituted as an asymmetric and wave-like thermo-dynamical model. Cold dry air masses from the Arctic and the warmer subtropical air masses occluded at a ‘polar front’<sup>35</sup> which gave rise to cyclonic disturbances that intensified and travelled along the front.<sup>36</sup> These cyclonic disturbances then passed through various phases of a characteristic life history, including rainfall.

Mapping the Polar Front was beneficial for agriculture as rainfall could be accurately predicted over a short term period.<sup>37</sup> The research was also driven by post-First World War expectations for military and commercial aviation since the accurate prediction of weather conditions became essential to ensure the safe operations of air routes.<sup>38</sup> Aviation and

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<sup>30</sup> Robert M Friedman, *Appropriating the Weather: Vilhelm Bjerknes and the Construction of a Modern Meteorology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

<sup>31</sup> Adrian Howkins, “Political Meteorology: Weather, climate and the contest for Antarctic sovereignty, 1939-1959,” *History of Meteorology* 4 (2008).

<sup>32</sup> It was, of course, never the sole reason for an expedition, as the history of the Falkland Islands attests.

<sup>32</sup> Howkins, “Political Meteorology.”

<sup>33</sup> Robert M Friedman, “Constituting the Polar Front, 1919-1920,” *Isis*, 73, 3 (September 1982), 343–362; Friedman, *Appropriating the Weather*, chapter 8.

<sup>34</sup> W.H. Wenstrom, “Milestones in Meteorology,” *The Scientific Monthly*, 5, 3 (September 1940), 231.

<sup>35</sup> Friedman, “Constituting the Polar Front,” 343, 347.

<sup>36</sup> T.S Glickman, ed, *Glossary of Meteorology* (Cambridge Massachusetts, American Meteorological Society (AMS): 2000). <http://amsglossary.allenpress.com/glossary/search?id=polar-front-theory1> (Accessed 1 May 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Friedman, “Constituting the Polar Front,” 348; “Flight Environment: Fronts” *Florida International University: Aeronautics Laboratory for Science, Technology and Research (ALLSTAR)* (8 May 2008). <http://www.allstar.fiu.edu/aero/fltenv6.htm> (Accessed 1 May 2010).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

agriculture were therefore the two keywords in proposals for dotting the south with weather stations.

### ***The first proposal for a South African Antarctic Expedition 1919–1921***

Referring specifically to ‘Meteorological’ and ‘Aeronautical’ demands, Professor Ernest James Goddard, chair of Zoology at the University of Stellenbosch, made the first traceable proposal for a South African Antarctic Expedition.<sup>39</sup> Goddard was an Australian national keen on Antarctic matters. He came to South Africa in 1912. He was an active member of the South African Royal Society and the South African Society for the Advancement of Science (commonly abbreviated as the S2A3).<sup>40</sup> Already in 1912, Goddard delivered a lecture on the importance of Antarctic research to the S2A3 in Port Elizabeth.<sup>41</sup> It is the same year his fellow Australian and a polar hero of the British Empire, Douglas Mawson, was leading the Australian Expedition of 1911–1914 into the home of the blizzard.<sup>42</sup>

Goddard’s proposal for the first ‘South African National Antarctic Expedition’ was made in late 1919.<sup>43</sup> Even though he was Australian, and had a strong personal drive to reach Antarctica, the terms of the proposal itself were an articulation of the prevailing ideas of the time, at least amongst those who sought a South African nationalism within the edifice of empire. It was also a reflection of wider debates about science, which were recharged in the aftermath of the First World War.<sup>44</sup>

Five issues crystallize quite clearly from Goddard’s proposal: nationalism, scientific internationalism, *pure* science, economic value and lastly how pure science can contribute to

<sup>39</sup> “S.A.’s Droughts Come from the South Pole,” 18; Eric Rosenthal and E. Blum, *Runner and Mailcoach. Postal History and Stamps of Southern Africa* (Cape Town: Purnell, 1969), 104; Cooper and Headland, “A history of South African Involvement,” 81.

<sup>40</sup> Cornelis Plug, South African Association for the Advancement of Science, personal communication (27 September 2010). Modelled on the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the S2A3 was created in 1903. This association came to be seen as a step towards ‘closer union’ (between the English and Afrikaans intelligentsia and within the (white) Empire). Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa 1820-2000*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6.

<sup>41</sup> E.J Goddard, *Report of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science* (1912), 279-287. Thanks to Cornelis Plug for alerting me to this speech.

<sup>42</sup> It was one of the ‘Heroic Age’ expeditions that lend itself particularly well to the *pathos* needed for enduring epics. Mawson, having lost his two companions along the way, man-hauled his sledge alone for the last 100 miles and survived to become a polar legend. D. Mawson, *The Home of the Blizzard, being the story of the Australasian Antarctic expedition, 1911-1914 vol. I* (London: Ballantyne Press, 1915).

<sup>43</sup> The only copy of the proposal I could find was in the *Stellenbosch University Magazine*. By all accounts Goddard was a much loved professor, who initiated regular field trips to interesting geological sites. These trips were credited to be the forerunner of the Stellenbosch ‘Berg-en-Toer Klub’, one of the oldest hiking associations in South Africa.

<sup>44</sup> The First World War is generally seen as a turning point in terms of the applications of science and technology to warfare – that had unexpectedly horrific results.

its economic merit.<sup>45</sup> Goddard called the expedition ‘...the first unanimously National effort on the part of South Africa to assume its National status and to contribute something towards helping the International recognition of a South African Nation. It is a well thought-out endeavour to urge on the scientific investigation of the potentialities of this great country.’<sup>46</sup>



Figure 1.2: The logo for the proposed South African National Antarctic Expedition of 1919 with Table Mountain in the background.

*Source: E.J Goddard, “South African National Antarctic Expedition” Stellenbosch University Magazine 20, 2 (December 1919)*

He mentioned how Australia, ‘as a young and vigorous nation...despatched one of the finest expeditions ever sent to the Antarctic.’<sup>47</sup> This was not in the spirit of competitiveness, or a simple expression of patriotism. It was also contained within a broader understanding of the Southern Hemisphere as an entity identifiable in geographic as well as scientific, economic and political terms. It was an early call for Southern Hemispheric cooperation that was borne out of a shared geographical feature – the Antarctic:

It has come increasingly patent to workers in a great number of branches of science in the Southern Hemisphere, during recent years, that a deeper and more scientific knowledge of the Antarctic Continent is not only intimately concerned with the elucidation of the larger scientific problems of the Southern Hemisphere, but is really necessary if we are to arrive at those broad and guiding generalisations which it is the

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<sup>45</sup> ‘Pure’ is also emphasised in the text itself.

<sup>46</sup> E.J Goddard, “South African National Antarctic Expedition,” *Stellenbosch University Magazine* 20, 2 (December 1919).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

aim of scientists to attain and which are so essential to the full development of economic potentialities of the Southern Continents.<sup>48</sup>

The latter excerpt also illustrates the importance attached to science as a contributor to economic growth. These sciences included meteorology, geology (mineral resources), oceanographic work and biology (especially fishery and whaling). The emphasis on the potential economic benefit was matched by the emphasis on the virtues of pure versus applied science, campaigning for the status afforded to *pure* science to be elevated:

In the pre-war days we must confess that the scientific man was regarded, or at least treated as an appendage – as a dreamer. His value was revealed to all in war time, and signs were shown of a new spirit... This is not to be a three years' saunter into the Antarctic and a series of adventurous journeys in search of something having no concrete value. It as a National effort to stimulate this country and the Government to a scientific and systematic survey of the possibilities of this country.<sup>49</sup>

Goddard focussed on how the scientific contributions can add to the national prestige of South Africa (which, it must be remembered, was still less than a decade old as a nation). In lobbying for support he explicitly stated: 'Every real South African, who concerns himself with the development and status of this country, must be desirous of seeing the great possibilities of this country measured and treated accordingly. In other words, he must hear the call of a South African Nationalism in these days of world-reconstruction.'<sup>50</sup>

Goddard also referred to another way in which the Union can prove to also be a vigorous nation – through the act of naming geographical features in Antarctica 'as a record of South Africa's contribution to our knowledge of the sector.'<sup>51</sup>

Goddard's proposal was not an obscure proposal by an enthusiastic entrepreneur. He had had the support of several scientists linked to the S2A3, especially after he attended a lecture at a S2A3 meeting on the logistic requirements by Captain Ernest Mills Joyce, who served on previous Antarctic expeditions.<sup>52</sup> The expedition was also supported by the Royal Society of

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> The Proposed South African Antarctic Expedition, 1930 -1932 Prospectus, TNA DO 35/171/10 (36).

South Africa.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, it was reported on in the press, including the Rhodesian (Zimbabwean) Press.<sup>54</sup>

Two reasons have been put forward why the far-developed plans were put aside in 1921. One possibility was the onset of an economic depression.<sup>55</sup> A more mundane but more likely reason was Goddard's transferral back to Australia in 1923.<sup>56</sup> Although the Goddard expedition was stillborn, it was nevertheless used frequently by advocates for South African participation in Antarctic science and later also by politicians as a reference point of early *Union* interest in the Antarctic.<sup>57</sup> Both Goddard's proposal and the first reasoned proposal to follow upon it (that of Mills Joyce himself in 1930) originated from people with few ties to South Africa as country.

### ***Meteorology as international science***

In the same year Goddard planned a South African expedition to the Antarctic, the Union Government initiated the Drought Investigation Commission to study the crippling periodic droughts that plagued the Union. The Commission consulted extensively and the final report, which was widely read,<sup>58</sup> was published in 1923. One of the experts they consulted was Dr Gordon Simpson, the Director of the Meteorological Office in London. Amongst his suggestions, which was even quoted by General Jan Smuts in his presidential speech to the S2A3 in 1925, was improving weather forecasting by establishing weather stations on Antarctica itself.<sup>59</sup> The theme of Southern Hemispheric cooperation as called for by the science itself, but also in terms of a 'southern empire' consciousness, was raised:

The most helpful method of attack ... will be the formation of a strong meteorological service to gather data of satisfactory reliability from Africa itself; and probably in connection with other countries from the Southern Hemisphere, from the Antarctic

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<sup>53</sup> Reuter, "Antarctic Mysteries: A South African Expedition," *The Rhodesia Herald* (18 July 1919), 24.

<sup>54</sup> Reuter, "Antarctic Mysteries", 24.

<sup>55</sup> This is given as the reason in Rosenthal and Blum, *Runner and Mail Coach* and subsequently reiterated by Dodds, 'South Africa in the Antarctic.'

<sup>56</sup> "The Proposed South African Antarctic Expedition, 1930–1932 Prospectus," TNA DO 35/171/10 (36) and C.A. du Toit, "Goddard, Ernest James," in D.W Krüger, ed, *Suid-Afrikaanse Biografiese Woordeboek Deel II* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1972), 268.

<sup>57</sup> "S.A.'s Droughts.," "Antarctic Conference: Opening Address by the Hon. Erik Louw Minister of External Affairs for Union of South Africa (1 December 1959)," INCH Eric Louw Collection, PV 4/53 and Viall, "South Africa: The Road to the Antarctic Treaty," 125.

<sup>58</sup> Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa*.

<sup>59</sup> The idea that the Antarctic had an influence on world weather originated with M.F Maury, an American oceanographer. In 1855, he called the area of sea surrounding the Antarctic a regulator in the meteorological machine of the world. M.F Maury, *The Physical Geography of the Sea and its Meteorology* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2003), 389. It was first published in 1855.

continent. There should be international cooperation of the countries interested ... the aim should be to establish ... observatories, [following a] or well-planned programme for an indefinite time.<sup>60</sup>

The idea of a series of meteorological stations had been floating about imperial polar committees for at least a decade. If the individual meteorologists and scientists did not actually sit on the relevant committees, references were made to the same group of meteorologists and scientists. The scientific community concerned with Antarctica tended to be small and parochial. Simpson's suggestions probably drew on those made to the 'Interdepartmental Committee on Research and Development of the Dependencies of Falkland Islands' in 1918.<sup>61</sup> At this conference, R.D. Mossman, a well-known Scottish meteorologist of the *Scotia* expedition (1902–1904), argued that a meteorological station at Bouvet Island was highly desirable, and strongly recommended that a meteorological station should be erected on the island in close cooperation with the governments of Australia, South Africa and New Zealand.<sup>62</sup>

Bouvet Island was an isolated piece of volcanic rock surrounded by vast expanses of sea, expanses for which there were almost a complete lack of data. For Norway, its importance ostensibly lay mainly in shipping and whaling (and a territorial foothold in Antarctica with nationalist benefits back home).<sup>63</sup> It was also explicitly noted that it was 'of great importance ... for purposes of weather forecasts in South Africa and South America.'<sup>64</sup> Couching it in terms of 'scientific' value (as opposed to commercial value), they were particularly keen to have a station that could work the whole year round, as very little was known about the winter conditions in the region.<sup>65</sup> Suggestions for cooperation amongst Southern Hemispheric countries in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic were also coming from Australia, where the explorer, climatologist, aviator and adventurer Sir George Hubert Wilkins presented plans

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<sup>60</sup> Union of South Africa, "Finale Rapport Van Die Droogte Ondersoek Kommissie," (Cape Town: October 1923).

<sup>61</sup> This committee was established to investigate sources of income for the Falkland Islands.

<sup>62</sup> L.S. Amery, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in Britain to JBM Hertzog, Minister of External Affairs in South Africa, Translation of a Norwegian Memorandum on Bouvet and Meteorology, 6 November 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 Vol 1.

<sup>63</sup> Peder Roberts, "Field of Frozen Dreams: Science, Strategy and the Antarctic in Norway, Sweden and the British Empire 1912-1952" (PhD dissertation, University of Stanford, Stanford, 2010), 78.

<sup>64</sup> L.S. Amery to Department of External Affairs in South Africa, Translation of Norwegian Memorandum on Bouvet Island(s) sent by, 21 March 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol.1.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. That a meteorological station on Bouvet could hold particular benefits for agriculture was also pointed out in yet another Norwegian memorandum (L.S. Amery, Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in Britain to JBM Hertzog, Minister of External Affairs in South Africa, Translation of a Norwegian Memorandum on Bouvet and Meteorology, 6 November 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 Vol 1.)

calling for a series of high southern latitude weather stations ran by South Africa, Australia and New Zealand to the Royal Meteorological Society in 1922.<sup>66</sup> The idea of a string of weather stations was one with currency in imperial Antarctic circles. Whether or not meteorological stations and expeditions had an explicit prior political mandate, they were often used as the polar dots along which imperial lines could be connected.<sup>67</sup>

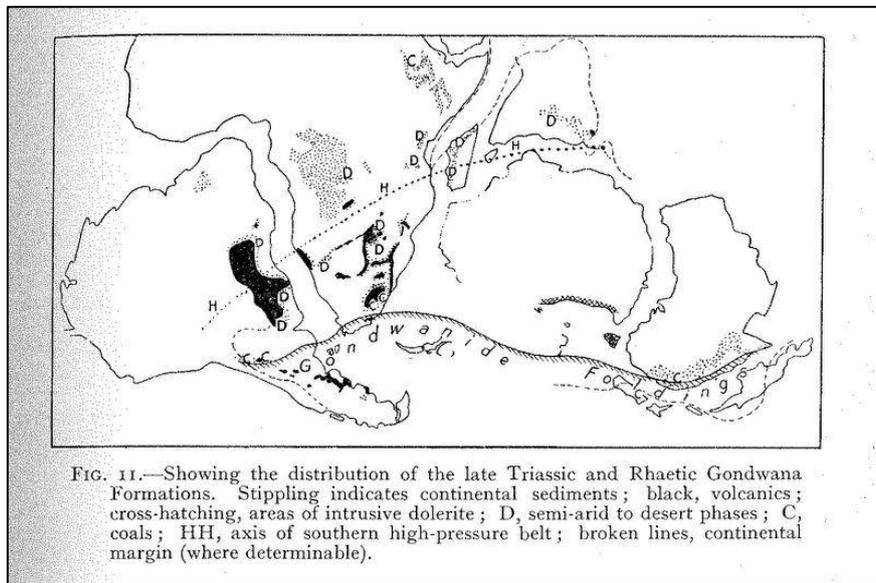


Figure 1.3: Du Toit's sketch of the positions of Gondwana land. Note Antarctica's position with regards to southern Africa.

*Source: A.L du Toit Our Wandering Continents: An Hypothesis of Continental Drifting (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1937)*

In his presidential address to the S2A3 in 1925, Jan Smuts called for the proper correlation of data from Antarctic stations as well as from South American, Australian, Indian and Malagasy stations, which, according to him, could yield results of great practical as well as scientific value. He ended this part of his speech with the following call: 'The round table of

<sup>66</sup> Hubert Wilkins to Editor, *The Mercury*, 29 April 1939, BPRC 127/12/29. From 1928, Wilkins redoubled his efforts to arouse international interest in a plan to establish, with the support of the governments of countries in the Southern Hemisphere, meteorological stations around the Antarctic continent and stations on the sub-Antarctic islands. The 1945 British Foreign Office handbook on *Territorial Claims in the Antarctic* noted that Wilkins' plans seemed to have had received more support in the United States than in the British Commonwealth. Brian Roberts for Research Department, Foreign Office, "Territorial Claims in the Antarctic," Copy 51 [AS 3748/453/G], (United Kingdom: Government Printer, 1 May 1945), 22. Report in SAB BTS 103/14 AJ 1945.

<sup>67</sup> See, for instance, the furore over Laurie Island which was handed over to the Argentinians by the Scotia expedition after the British seemed uninterested in maintaining a weather station there. It became contentious point in British Argentine scuffles in the Antarctic up to the Falklands War (1982) and beyond.

meteorology should become the meeting place and reunion of the scattered members of the ancient mother continent of Gondwana land.<sup>68</sup>

Smuts' philosophy of holism, where the local and the particular was also part of the transcendental and the universal, the Whole, is illustrative here.<sup>69</sup> Earlier in the speech, Smuts pointed towards South Africa's particular position on the sub-Continent (the most 'civilised' country) and in the Southern Hemisphere generally (its centrality).<sup>70</sup> He also sought to reorient science away from the 'habits of thought and the viewpoints characterising its birthplace in the northern hemisphere.'<sup>71</sup> This emphasis on a 'round table' and the reference to Gondwana land, fitted into the discourse of what Dubow termed 'a commonwealth of science'.<sup>72</sup> Science, seen as a 'universalistic, transcendent and objective set of practices'<sup>73</sup> was also a vehicle for promoting certain political and cultural beliefs. In the case of societies such as the S2A3, it was a place where scientists in South Africa and other Southern Hemisphere dominions could interact with the metropole on an equal footing, as nations that are part of a progressive commonwealth of letters.

## **The public 'use' of the Antarctic and Sub-Antarctic weather and resources**

By the 1930s, the Bergen School of meteorology became established as a conceptual foundation for atmospheric science.<sup>74</sup> It also filtered through to the general public. Meteorologists and navigators sought to apply the theory to the Southern Hemisphere as well. In an article written to *The Outspan* Major Johan Gunnar Isachsen, leader of the Norwegian

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<sup>68</sup> "Report of the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting for the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, Being Volume XXII of the South African Journal of Science" (Johannesburg: 1925). It is interesting to note that at that stage, the concept of Gondwana land has not been widely accepted yet.

<sup>69</sup> Saul Dubow, "A Commonwealth of Science: the British Association in South Africa, 1905 and 1929," Saul Dubow, ed, *Science and society in southern Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 80.

<sup>70</sup> "Report of the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting for the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, Being Volume XXII of the South African Journal of Science" (Johannesburg: 1925). Smuts' view of South Africa and Africa as having a central position in the Southern Hemisphere, as well as being an important biological and geographical watershed, drew on the continental drift theories of Alfred Wegner *The Origin of Continents and Oceans* (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), as well as C.E.B Brooks, *The evolution of climate* (New York: AMS Press, 1978). See Peder Anker, *Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire, 1895-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 67.

<sup>71</sup> "Report of the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting for the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, Being Volume XXII of the South African Journal of Science" (Johannesburg: 1925). Dubow also uses this extract in his argument about science, nationhood and the transition from Empire to Commonwealth.

<sup>72</sup> Dubow, "A Commonwealth of Science."

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Howkins, "Political Meteorology," 32; Friedman, "Constituting the Polar Front," 343.

1930–1931 *Norvegia* expedition to Antarctica via Bouvet Island, wrote about the significance of the Antarctic for South African weather<sup>75</sup>:

The Antarctic can be said to be the weather factory of the world...Disturbances in the weather in the Antarctic have a definite bearing on the future weather of South Africa, and it is the ultimate hope of scientists, by means of an Antarctic weather station, to inform South Africa and the rest of the world of the weather they may expect in a week, or a month, or even three months' time.<sup>76</sup>

Other serious appeals were made in South African press for attention to 'polar fronts' in terms of South Africa weather: In May 1931 *The Automobile*, a monthly magazine of the Automobile Association of South Africa, ran an article asking 'New Territory for the Union?'<sup>77</sup> The article was taken up in both the English and Afrikaans daily press.<sup>78</sup> According to them, the immediate value to South Africa of 'that portion of the Antarctic Continent laying between our own most eastern and most western meridians', was whaling and 'its undoubted bearing on our rainfall and our droughts.'<sup>79</sup> An editorial in the republican *Die Vaderland* emphasised that the Norwegians already realised the importance of a polar front in the Arctic and that, in the editor's estimate, the masses of water between Antarctica and South Africa would mean that these fronts would be more stable in the Southern Hemisphere. It also noted that the weather predictions were useful in terms of 'those fearsome droughts' as well as warning systems to promote safety and security for naval vessels.<sup>80</sup>

There was little to no mention in these speeches and articles of 'pure' scientific pursuits – but rather a utilitarian science in service of economic gain. An article in *The South African Nation*, another publication favouring a 'South Africanist' ideology, boldly proclaimed that 'our government should...not be content with the one island but should ask for them all.'<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *The Outspan* was a monthly South Africa family magazine featuring popular and photo articles as well as novellas. Its content was targeted at an English-speaking audience who readily identified themselves as South African (as opposed to English).

<sup>76</sup> J. Gunnar Isachsen, "My Friends in South Africa Ask Me: 'But why do you go there?'" *The Outspan* (17 October 1930), 11.

<sup>77</sup> "New Territory for the Union?" *The Automobile* (May 1931), 72.

<sup>78</sup> "Antarctic Claim: Union's Demand for Land," *The Star* (7 May 1931), 12; Editorial, "Antarctica [sic] en Ons," *Ons Vaderland* (8 May 1931), 4.

<sup>79</sup> Anon, "New Territory for the Union?," 72.

<sup>80</sup> Editorial "Antarctica [sic] en Ons."

<sup>81</sup> The author also wrote a children's book set partly on Marion Island, H. Luhis, *The Home of the Wandering Albatross: A South African Story for Children* (Cape Town: Juta, 1928). H. Luhis, "Our Outlying Islands," *The South African Nation*, 1, 50 (21 March 1925), 7.

Pointing out that Gough, the Prince Edward Islands and Crozets would be more useful locations for weather stations; the author proceeded to lay out the islands' economic potential. This ranged from using the 'inexhaustible supply' of the kelp 'weed' to derive products such as iodine to using albatross breast skin for 'ladies' feather muffs and boas.'<sup>82</sup> Moreover, the islands could help with the 'unemployment problem' amongst young men: 'I will vouch for it that after one voyage they will come back to you, better sons, and better and more useful men.'<sup>83</sup> Most of the article, however, revolved around the 'ruthless slaughter of seals.'<sup>84</sup> The beaches of the Prince Edward Islands were fecund breeding grounds for three species of seal. The sub-Antarctic fur seal and the Antarctic fur-seal were coveted for their pelts and the Elephant seals for the fine quality of oil. A bountiful hunting ground in the nineteenth century, the beaches were all but bare from seals during mating season by the early twentieth century. Luhis recommended that the government should proclaim 'a national refuge' for the seals for a number of years so that the populations can increase and 'these islands would again become profitable.'<sup>85</sup> The proposals of a 'national refuge' for seals did not realise until many decades later, and then in a very different context (see chapter five). There was, however, a marine mammal's population decline that the South African and other governments did grow increasingly concerned about, for reasons of profit and politics: whales.

## The southern reaches of the Empire 1908–1926

Before proceeding to the whales and whaling, it is crucial to understand how the history of South African involvement in Antarctic during this period dovetailed with the southern reaches of the British Empire. Great Britain first extended her imperial reach to the Antarctic when letters patent issued in 1908 and 1917 brought the Antarctic Peninsula and the adjacent island chains under British control as the Falkland Island Dependencies.<sup>86</sup> Early in 1920, Britain communicated a decision to Australia and New Zealand that the whole of Antarctica should ultimately belong to the Empire.<sup>87</sup> In 1923, the Ross Dependency was added to the

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<sup>82</sup> Luhis, "Our Outlying Islands," 7.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 This is a pervasive idea. A year on Marion continued to be seen almost as a rite of passage, similar to going to the army. This, along with the concept of 'adventure' and 'venturing out' will be discussed in chapter five.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Dodds, *Pink Ice*, xvii.

<sup>87</sup> Under Secretary of State to Lord Curzon of Kedleston, 5 December 1919 and L.S Amery to Governor-General of New Zealand, 7 February 1920, TNA FO 371/4328. It was copied to other self-governing Dominions (including the Union) The reasons given included the strategic importance of whale oil,

Empire when an Order in Council put this area under the authority of the governor-general of New Zealand.<sup>88</sup> A decade later, in 1933, the Australian Antarctic Territory was created.<sup>89</sup> Of the Southern Hemisphere Dominions, only South Africa never put forward a claim nor was it prompted to do so by the metropole.

The 1926 Imperial Conference in London presented a turning point in Antarctic history in general, and specifically for the Dominions of Empire. At this conference, Great Britain and the Dominions (South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Canada) were declared: ‘...autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.’<sup>90</sup> The South African Prime Minister, General J.B.M Hertzog, and his Canadian counterpart, W.M King, were the prime movers behind this declaration.<sup>91</sup> With preferential trade links firmly in place, it made little economic sense to wander too far off the path laid by Britain. Although the independence gained from Britain carried political weight, especially domestically, until the end of the Second World War, South Africa did not deviate too much from British foreign policy in practice. Antarctica, the sub-Antarctic and the oceans between, were hardly the preferred theatres where the South African government and politicians flexed their political muscle.<sup>92</sup>

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exploitation of mineral sources, the potential for new trade routes and the increasing radius of aircraft and submarines, which opened up the southern oceans as a theatre of war. It was also stated that ‘every inhabited land in the direction of the Antarctic regions is already British and inhabited by peoples of British descent; and the predominance of British discovery and enterprise in the Antarctic is overwhelming.’

<sup>88</sup> The area included the coasts of the Ross Sea, the islands and territories adjacent thereto from 150°W to 160°E up to 60°S. The creation of the Ross Dependency at this point in time was to prevent the Norwegians to claim the area and to control Norwegian exploitation of the whaling stock. Dodds, *Geopolitics in Antarctica*, 160.

<sup>89</sup> It was the largest claim to the continent, comprising all ‘the islands and territories other than Adélie Land which are situated south of 60° South and lying between 160 and 45° East.’ For a variety of reasons, not least because it was indisputably French on basis of discovery, the British never made a serious attempt to include Adélie land in their Antarctic Empire. Dodds, *Geopolitics in Antarctica*, 77. Also see Roberts, “Territorial Claims in the Antarctic,” 99, SAB BTS 103/14 AJ 1945

<sup>90</sup> This became known as the Balfour Declaration, after Lord Balfour the Chairman of the Inter-Imperial Relations Committee tasked with drafting the treaty. For a copy see A4640/32 Inter-Imperial Relations Committee Report Proceedings and Memoranda, 1926, National Archives of Australia (NAA). Available on <http://naa12.naa.gov.au/scripts/Imagine.asp?B=3208590>. Accessed 20 July 2010.

<sup>91</sup> Frank Welsh, *A History of South Africa* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), 399.

<sup>92</sup> The major deviation from British and Commonwealth policies was the Gold Standard Crisis of 1931 and 1932. Contrary to the other dominions and Britain, South Africa refused to abolish the gold standard, with disastrous political and economic consequences for the Union. Gold is also infinitely closer to the South African political, cultural and economic heart than whales and other marine mammals. This argument benefited from a conversation with Lindie Koorts. Also see Keith Breckenridge, “‘Money with dignity’:

During the inter-war period, South African decisions regarding the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic were mostly driven by economic factors (especially whaling). In instances where the South African government had to make decisions about the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic based on foreign policy, especially during the Second World War, it happened on an *ad hoc* and pragmatic basis. More often than not the decision-makers (mostly a few individual bureaucrats) based their decisions on recommendations from Britain, especially from what became known as the Polar Committee, which was also established at the 1926 Imperial Conference.<sup>93</sup> The Committee was formed with the directive to consider British territorial interests in the Antarctic.<sup>94</sup> South Africa had a representative on this Committee that drew up a report codifying the British policy in the Antarctic with the explicit goal that ‘ultimately it may be found possible to assert and maintain British control over the Antarctic region.’<sup>95</sup> The summary of the proceedings that listed the areas Great Britain held title to, or at least wanted to hold title to, was subsequently sent to foreign powers that showed an interest in Antarctic.<sup>96</sup>

It is against this background that the major stream directing South African Antarctic policy in the interwar years and until the end of the Second World War was tied up with South Africa’s position within British imperial interests. This influence is pervasive, from the scientific proposals embedded in a South Africanist discourse, to the economic and diplomatic issues around whaling.

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Migrants, Minelords and the Cultural Politics of the South African Gold Standard Crisis, 1920-33,” *The Journal of African History* 36 (1995), 271-304.

<sup>93</sup> Minutes, Imperial Conference, Committee on British Policy in the Antarctic (1926), TNA CAB 32/51

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Stenographic Notes of Meetings, Imperial Conference E, (126) Series. E. 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting – E. 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 1926, TNA CAB 32/46.

## Antarctic Whaling<sup>97</sup>

The history of Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic islands cannot be detached from the history of the encircling oceans. As scarce as terrestrial life on Antarctica seems, as abundant, at least in mass, is the life in its marine environment. For the first few decades, Antarctic whaling was dependent on shore stations, for which the islands, especially those to the south-west, were used. The whaling industry was not only important in Antarctic politics because of its terrestrial tangibility, but also because whaling vessels were the most frequent visitors to the high southern latitudes. In Britain, the few heroic men who visited the actual continent may have captured more public imagination, but in terms of continuous presence the whalers clocked more hours. And exactly because of the inaccessibility of Antarctica and the islands, the ocean was arguably more important than *terra firma* in making territorial claims.

It is in this context that whales and whalers were important actors on the Antarctic stage. And in the early twentieth century, the director was mostly Britain. As Peder Roberts argued, however, until pelagic whaling became dominant, whales were, in a sense, regarded as imperial subjects: ‘As long as Britain maintained a monopoly on the sites where whales could be processed, the cetaceans effectively became British imperial subjects, capable of being ordered through the gaze of science.’<sup>98</sup>

Although by no means the only reason for their presence in the region, whaling was one of the connections to Antarctica, the sub-Antarctic and the oceans between that motivated the both British and Norwegians. The first modern whaling station was built by a Norwegian-Argentine company in 1904 on Grytviken, South Georgia (a British island).<sup>99</sup> Whaling was an important industry and, especially in Norway, a major economic activity. By the 1920s, whale oil was used in the manufacturing of produce such as candles, cosmetics and margarine.<sup>100</sup> Whale oil’s most valuable application, and the main reason governments wanted to control the industry, was its use in explosives.<sup>101</sup> The whaling industry started to

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<sup>97</sup> Thanks to Denzil Miller for the conversation that led to a few of the ideas in this section.

<sup>98</sup> Roberts, “Field of Frozen Dreams,” 58.

<sup>99</sup> J.N Tønnessen and A.O. Johnsen, *The History of Modern Whaling* (London: C.Hurst & Company, 1982), 159. Ann Savours *The Voyages of the Discovery: The Illustrated History of Scott’s Ship* (London: Virgin, 1992), 176. French and British sealers traversed islands on the high southern latitudes since the eighteenth century. Some also argue that Nathaniel Palmer, a sealing captain, was the first to sight Antarctica in 1820.

<sup>100</sup> J.D Ommanney *Lost Leviathan: Whales and Whaling* (London: Hutchinson, 1971), 56.

<sup>101</sup> Whale-oil is a source of nitro-glycerine. Peter Beck linked the increasing official management of the industry to its rise in strategic value. Peter Beck, “Securing the dominant ‘place in the pan Antarctic sun’ for

focus on the Southern Hemisphere in the beginning of the twentieth century as the whaling stock in the Northern Hemisphere became more depleted and the potential for further expansion exhausted.<sup>102</sup>

Whalers' most lucrative grounds in the south were from the shores of South Georgia, and other Falkland Islands Dependencies Islands which were part of British territory.<sup>103</sup> These British territories were kept afloat from the money made from the whaling concessions. As such, whaling to a large extent dictated the relationship between Britain and Norway in the Antarctic.<sup>104</sup> It was a tense relationship even though the industries were interdependent.<sup>105</sup> An example of their interdependence was that a 1920 policy by the United Kingdom to gradually replace Norwegian labour by British labour<sup>106</sup> failed, and by 1934 most men employed by the whaling industry were almost exclusively Norwegian.<sup>107</sup>

Cape Town, Saldanha and Durban were geographically well placed for whaling activities, and the Norwegian whaling vessels frequently docked in these harbours either for the winter or to be overhauled. South Africa, however, was still very much a part of the British Empire. Coupled with its geographic position, the imperial scientific gaze, as referred to earlier, included South Africa's view. Its links to both the Empire and the whaling industry arguably played a leading role in South African (non-)involvement in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic.

### **South Africa and Antarctic Whaling**

The first South African company to commence with whaling operations in the Antarctic was the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company (a precursor to the well-known firm Irvin and Johnson) in 1911, using a floating factory at South Georgia.<sup>108</sup> South African pelagic whaling in the Antarctic started during the 1928/9 season when the Kerguelen Sealing and Whaling

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the British Empire: the policy of extending British control over Antarctica," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 29 (1983), 454.

<sup>102</sup> Roberts, "Territorial Claims in the Antarctic," 111, SAB BTS 103/14 AJ 1945. Tønnessen and Johnsen, *The History of Modern Whaling*, 162.

<sup>103</sup> Howkins, "Frozen Empires," 12.

<sup>104</sup> Tønnessen and Johnsen, *The History of Modern Whaling*, 294–305.

<sup>105</sup> Tønnessen and Johnsen gave a full account of this, albeit it with strong Norwegian bias.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Roberts, "Territorial Claims in the Antarctic," 6, SAB BTS 103/14 AJ 1945. The Norwegians and Britons also worked together on whaling research and the respective scientists frequently corresponded. Sometimes British scientists were trained by Norwegians in methods such as whale marking. Savours, *The Voyages of the Discovery*, 175–184.

<sup>108</sup> Peter B Best and G.J.B Ross, "Whales and Whaling," A.I.L Payne and R.J.M Crawford, eds, *Oceans of Life off Southern Africa* (Cape Town: Vlaeberg Publishers, 1989), 321.

Company<sup>109</sup> sent a converted vessel south. A second, custom built factory ship, the *Tafelberg* was also used for pelagic whaling in the Antarctic regions.<sup>110</sup> Whaling off the South African coast was more often than not linked with Norwegian persons, and made use of Norwegian capital and workers. Sometimes South African men were taken on as crew or worked on shore.<sup>111</sup> By the 1920s, however, the companies were British or Union owned. Therefore it can be concluded that both the British and Norwegian industries also influenced South African whaling industries.

It is, however, not just the South African whalers going south that matters here, but more importantly the whales coming north. Most species of baleen migrated to the sub-tropical and tropical coasts to breed, with many of them passing South African shores. Whaling stations established at coastal cities such as Durban caught whales on their sub-tropical sojourn, including breeding females. Population studies, also by the British Discovery Committee (see below), showed that there were demonstrable links between the Antarctic and the whaling grounds off Durban.<sup>112</sup> There was also another more subtle but more critical reason why the Anglo-Norwegian whaling industry played a key role in South African Antarctic history during this era. Whereas Britain actively encouraged the dominions of New Zealand and Australia to claim sectors of Antarctica, the whaling industry resulted in a different attitude towards the sector south of the more recalcitrant dominion of South Africa.

### ***The Discovery Committee 1923–1929***

The Discovery Committee was established in Britain in 1923 to investigate and research whaling in the Southern Ocean. They were supplied with a refitted vessel, the *Discovery*.<sup>113</sup> The members of the Committee were appointed by the Colonial Secretary in Britain and had as a mandate the systematic exploration of the Falkland Islands Dependencies' economic resources.<sup>114</sup> They also had to place southern ocean whaling on a scientific basis.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> A subsidiary of Irvin and Johnson.

<sup>110</sup> Best and Ross, "Whales and Whaling," 326

<sup>111</sup> Ommanney *Lost Leviathan*, 30.

<sup>112</sup> Best and Ross, "Whales and Whaling," 332; Savours, *The Voyages of the Discovery*, 210.

<sup>113</sup> This is the same vessel that took Captain Scott south in 1901-1904. Savours, *The Voyages of the Discovery*, 5.

<sup>114</sup> J. Coleman-Cooke, *Discovery II in the Antarctic: The Story of British Research in the Southern Seas*, (London: Odhams Press Ltd, 1963), 19; Tønnessen and Johnsen, *The History of Modern Whaling*, 303. Anachronistically, the *Discovery Investigations* has been referred to as the forerunners of Greenpeace, the WWF and other conservation entities. Rosalind Marsden, "Discovery Investigations: An early attempt at ecologically sustainable development?" *Archives of Natural History* 32 (October 2005), 161–176.

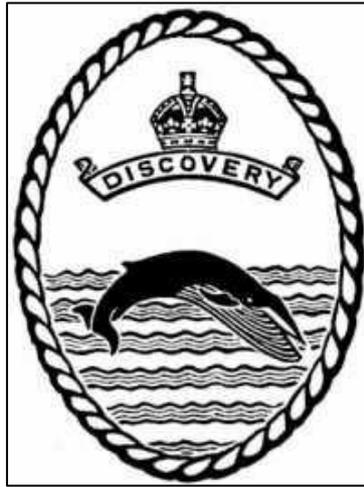


Figure 1.4: The Discovery Committee logo showing the imperial crown spanning the whales.

*Source: (Peder Roberts, 'Science and commerce on the high seas: the international waters of the Antarctic between the world wars,' paper presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> SCAR History Workshop, Washington DC, 3 December 2009.)*

Furthermore, they administered the Dependencies Research and Development Fund.<sup>116</sup> These funds came mainly from taxing Norwegian whaling companies in the Falkland Islands Dependencies. This meant that the work of the Discovery Committee was intertwined with the colonial policies in Antarctica.<sup>117</sup> The secondary objectives of the Discovery Committee were oceanographic and hydrographical research and although their initial goals were narrowly defined, they amassed a great wealth of scientific data over the years of the committee's existence, and their research activities expanded over the whole southern ocean.<sup>118</sup> It also had a thinly veiled political mandate, as their activities demonstrated 'effective occupation' over British territories, an additional task that became more urgent following the 1926 Imperial Conference. The whaling industry in South Africa, as well as the location of South Africa's ports, made South Africa a frequent stop for the Discovery Committee's vessels. The investigations also had a few other, more minor links with South Africa: their best cook was for instance South African. In the 1920s and the 1930s the Discovery Committee was more indirectly influential in South African Antarctic history, in

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<sup>115</sup> Rosalind Marsden, "Expedition to Investigation: The Work of the Discovery Committee," Margaret Deacon, T. Rice and Colin Summerhayes, eds, *Understanding the Oceans: A Century of Ocean Exploration* (London: UCL Press, 2001), 69.

<sup>116</sup> Tønnessen and Johnsen, *The History of Modern Whaling*, 303.

<sup>117</sup> The Falkland Islands was a British Colony with around 3000 inhabitants. Based on the 'sector' principle, the Falkland Islands Dependencies, which included a large part of the Antarctic continent, was placed under the authority of the Governor General of the Falkland Islands.

<sup>118</sup> Marsden, "Expedition to Investigation," 69.

that it formed an essential part of the puzzle where South African involvement in Antarctica slotted in.<sup>119</sup> Another key piece was the *Norvegia* expeditions (1927–1929).

### ***The Norvegia expeditions (1927–1929)***

The privately-sponsored Norwegian *Norvegia* expeditions (intermittently from 1927–1931) were in part a response to the government-sponsored expeditions of the Discovery Committee. The expeditions were backed by Consul Lars Christensen, a whaling magnate from Sandefjord in Norway. They were closely linked to Norwegian territorial interests in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic. The *Norvegia* also mostly departed from Cape Town harbour.<sup>120</sup>

Discussions about maritime affairs were hardly new to British and Norwegian parties, both bordering on the North Sea. In terms of the Southern Ocean, the British and the Norwegian foreign offices had been corresponding on the subject of Antarctic whaling territory at least since 1925. It was also at this time that the Norwegians started to concentrate on pelagic whaling.<sup>121</sup> Pelagic whaling was not depended on concessions to work in British Territory but there was also a realisation in Norway that ‘the moral and political importance of a permanent footing in the Antarctic should not be underestimated.’<sup>122</sup> Polar exploration carried popular and political weight in Norway, including the ‘heroic’ exploits of men such as Frijdtof Nansen and Roald Amundsen. Moreover, the Norwegian whaling industry was invested with both socio-political and economic capital.

Initially, the Union was not included in this correspondence. It was only forwarded to the Union beginning of 1928, in accordance with policy decisions made during the 1926 Imperial Conference.<sup>123</sup> Although the Union Government rarely took part in the official correspondence, the negotiations between the United Kingdom and Norway were pivotal in their impact on the geopolitical aspects of South Africa’s Antarctic history.<sup>124</sup> In January

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<sup>119</sup> In terms of fisheries research, the impact of the *Discovery Investigations* was more direct. (Interview with Peter Best, Cape Town (1 April 2010)). Best is one of the most well-known Southern Hemisphere experts on whales and dolphins and their natural history.

<sup>120</sup> Not coincidentally, many of them also had links to the whaling industry at Durban and the Norwegian Community in Zululand. “Celebre Norske Jæsterikapstaden: Kapteinerne Hornvedt og Lutzow-Holm,” *Fram: Norsk Maanedstidning for Skandinaver i Syd-Afrika* (November 1929), 2-3, “Norge Okkuper Nytt Land I Antarktik,” *Fram* (February 1930); “Ridder Abraham Emil Larsen,” *Fram* (March 1930), 1–2.

<sup>121</sup> T.K Derry, *A History of Modern Norway* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 351.

<sup>122</sup> Article in *Tidens Tigen*, a leading Norwegian newspaper Gascoigne to Cushendun, 17 November 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1.

<sup>123</sup> Secretary of State, United Kingdom to Minister of External Affairs, Union of South Africa, 24 January 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol.1.

<sup>124</sup> In most of the External Affairs folders held in the South African National Archives Repository, there are carbon copies of outgoing correspondence. Replies to correspondence usually stated the serial number of the

1928, the Union government had been included in a series of circulars from the Dominions Office regarding Norwegian territorial interests in the Antarctic. It followed the Norwegian occupation of Bouvet Island, an episode which led to the Union virtually disclaiming interest in possessing Antarctic territory.

The first *Norvegia* expedition landed on Bouvet Island on 1 December 1927 and claimed it for Norway. They demonstrated effective occupation, by now a stronger prerequisite for Antarctic claims, by building a small depot. They planned to set up a small meteorological station, but it was immediately clear that the hostile environment made this impossible.<sup>125</sup>

The expedition was privately funded by Lars Christensen who was searching for new sealing and whaling grounds and pursuing scientific work.<sup>126</sup> The expedition was also authorised by the Norwegian Government to take possession of any new land for the Norwegian crown.<sup>127</sup>

Christensen drove this, not being prepared to apply to Great Britain nor any other country for concessions to operate in waters he considered in actual fact unexplored.<sup>128</sup> In their initial reaction to the Norwegian claim, communicated to the Union, the United Kingdom government informed the Norwegian foreign office that: 'His Majesty's Governments are unable to see on what grounds a Norwegian claim could be substantiated.'<sup>129</sup> Their fear, communicated to the Union, was that:

[a]lthough it is ostensibly a private venture, it looks as if the Norwegians are entering into the Antarctic with the same object as the British, namely domination. There is much territory still to be explored and as sovereignty follows occupation, the Norwegians may be discovering territory of greater extent than that of the British

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correspondence being replied to, and it was clear from most correspondence that the circulars dealing with these topics were held mostly for information. There is little trace of any outgoing correspondence in these files, letting one doubt whether the Union indeed responded at all. This conclusion does not, however, mean to exclude the possibility that the topic was discussed in informal conversations, for instance.

<sup>125</sup> W.J Mills, *Exploring Polar Frontiers: An Encyclopaedia vol. 2* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 144. Interestingly, in defending their title to Bouvet Island, the British blamed the weather for preventing the *Discovery* from landing during its 1925–1928 voyages and so demonstrate British control. G.H Villiers for Secretary of State, United Kingdom to B. Vogt, Norwegian Ambassador to United Kingdom, 15 February 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1. As will be seen, several attempts throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to establish a weather station on the island failed. Today, it has the reputation amongst polar scientists to be truly uninhabitable, and not suitable for overwintering. (Interview with Nico de Bruyn, Pretoria, 5 March 2010. De Bruyn spent three months on the island in the summer of 2000).

<sup>126</sup> F.O Lindley, British Legation in Oslo to A. Chamberlain, Principle Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London, 7 December 1927, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1.

<sup>127</sup> Chamberlain to Lindley, 28 February 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1.

<sup>128</sup> Mills, *Exploring Polar Frontiers*, 144.

<sup>129</sup> Villiers to Vogt, 9 December 1927, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1.

sphere, and seriously challenge the British attempt to obtain domination in the Antarctic.<sup>130</sup>

Britain's protest was in part motivated by the knowledge that their claims to Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic was not as secure as they would have had wished them to be. And even though the Dominions might have an interest in exploiting Antarctic territories, the Norwegians were far more active in that particular area of Antarctica. Nevertheless, there was a feeble attempt to call upon the sheer size of the Empire in the Southern Hemisphere as a justification for their position:

Considerations of geography alone, with the British Dominions of South Africa, Australia and New Zealand projecting down toward the Antarctic continent, gave the British Empire a very special interest in the political rights over those areas, particularly in view of the growing disposition of the Dominions to interest themselves in the disposal of Antarctic territories. The justification of the general attitude of Great Britain in this matter was the fact that for many years British administrative activities alone had been exercised in Antarctic waters.<sup>131</sup>

Geographically, South Africa was recognised by Britain to be one of the Dominions to take in consideration in matters Antarctic. South Africa had, however, shown much less interest in Antarctica than New Zealand or the Commonwealth of Australia (who had, after all, the great *British* explorer, Mawson)<sup>132</sup> and was rarely directly addressed in correspondence. Anglo-Norwegian relations proved more of a priority and in the ensuing correspondence, no particular reference was made to the interests South Africa potentially had in this scuffle.

The ensuing debate illustrated the priorities of Britain in the Antarctic, and how this, coupled with South African uninterest, led to the ostensibly 'South African' sector and the islands included therein, coming under the Norwegian crown. Norwegian diplomats were adamant that they would not 'haul down that flag again.'<sup>133</sup> The British eventually conceded for two reasons. First, their claim to Bouvet Island was spurious and should Norway challenge the legality thereof on an international platform such as the League of Nations or the World

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<sup>130</sup> Department of External Affairs to Secretary of Defence, Union of South Africa, 19 March 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1.

<sup>131</sup> Cushendun to Gascoigne, 18 October 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1.

<sup>132</sup> He was referred to as British in these communications. Mawson was a great believer in Empire, but mostly appropriated as the quintessential Australian hero. Brigid Hains, *The Ice and the Inland: Mawson, Flynn and the Myth of the Frontier* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002).

<sup>133</sup> R.H Campbell for Lord Cushendun to A.D.F Gascoigne, 18 October 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1.

Court in The Hague, it would probably not have held.<sup>134</sup> Secondly, and more importantly, it presented an opportunity for Britain to negotiate a secret agreement with Norway with regards to whaling as well as territorial claims. It was understood that Norway would not encroach on the Antarctic territories over which Britain wished to maintain hegemony. Further, it was agreed that the Norwegians and the British would come to some convention as to the conservation of whales,<sup>135</sup> especially so that ‘industries cannot proceed to whale under other countries’ flags not part of the Anglo-Norwegian convention.’<sup>136</sup> On 21 November 1928, the Union of South Africa was informed of the British decision to waive the claim to Bouvet and withdraw their opposition to the Norwegian claim after ‘careful consideration of the issues involved.’<sup>137</sup> The Bouvet incident was in part the implementation of the British Antarctic Policy as articulated in 1926, namely diverting the attention of foreign powers away from British territory towards other parts of the Antarctic.

The attention of the *Norvegia* and the Norwegian government was directed to the area between the western boundary of Enderby Land and the eastern boundary of Coats Land and Bouvet, areas that fell within the ‘South African sector’<sup>138</sup>, which was not listed in the 1926 Summary of Proceedings sent out by Britain.<sup>139</sup> This policy was tested in 1929–1931 when both the *Norvegia* and the *Discovery*, this time under the flag of the British-Australian-New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition (BANZARE) expedition went ‘exploring’ in the Antarctic.

### ***British-Australian-New-Zealand expedition***

The idea for an Empire wide expedition was first put forward by Douglas Mawson, the Australian Antarctic front man. The initial reaction from the United Kingdom Treasury to the expedition proposed by Mawson was that it was ‘a matter for the Dominions whose territories

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<sup>134</sup> Lindley to Chamberlain, 12 March 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1. Through polar explorer and diplomat, Fridtjof Nansen, Norway was also an influential member of the League of Nations. Derry, *A History of Modern Norway*, 336–341.

<sup>135</sup> Conservation in this case meant the careful management of whaling stock for maximum profit. From 1925 to 1931 the Norwegian proportion of barrels of whale oil produced in the Antarctic was almost two-thirds of the whole. Derry, *A History of Modern Norway*, 351. Britain was concerned about Norwegian competition and the extermination of whaling stock.

<sup>136</sup> R.H Campbell for Acting Foreign Secretary, Lord Cushendun to A.D.F Gascoigne, 18 October 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1 The reference is probably made to Japan.

<sup>137</sup> Leo Amery to Minister of External Affairs, Union of South Africa, 21 November 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1.

<sup>138</sup> Roberts, “Territorial Claims in the Antarctic,” 29, SAB BTS 103/14 AJ 1945.

<sup>139</sup> Lindley to Chamberlain, 12 March 1928 and Vogt to Chamberlain, 23 April 1928, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1.

border the Antarctic viz. Australia, New Zealand and South Africa; and the demand on the United Kingdom for financial assistance' was

...contrary to the now accepted constitutional principle of the Empire as a Commonwealth of Nations... We do not dream of asking Australasia and South Africa to contribute to the maintenance of the Empire's prestige in (say) North America and the Arctic; and there is no reason why the British taxpayer should be asked to contribute towards this expedition.<sup>140</sup>

Then again, with Norwegian exploration proceeding apace, it was decided that the expedition could have the larger vessel of the Discovery Committee. BANZARE was scheduled to depart from Cape Town in October 1929. Mawson, who was a major proponent of British domination in Antarctica, insisted on the expedition departing from Cape Town, although it would have been more practical to depart from Australia.<sup>141</sup> At the request of JMB (Barry) Hertzog, the Prime Minister, the South African Government paid for the costs of overhauling the ship before her departure and no harbour duties were asked.<sup>142</sup> The scientists also boarded in Cape Town. Irvin and Johnson, the South African Fisheries and Whaling Company, provided some logistical support along the way. BANZARE was not just important in that it demonstrated that South Africa had in indeed some interest in spending money on Antarctic matters, even if just for the sake of the Commonwealth, but it was during the BANZARE that the 'boundary' between Norwegian and British interests were more firmly set.<sup>143</sup>

### **'Losing' the South African Sector, December 1929**

It was in this historical context of the BANZARE and *Norvegia* expeditions that the Dominions Office forwarded more despatches to the Union and the other 'interested Dominions' with regard to the movements of the *Norvegia*.<sup>144</sup> The South African government was also informed that the Norwegians were preparing for an expedition to Antarctica and carried authorisation to take possession of any new or unexplored land in the name of the Norwegian King.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Quoted in Savours, *The Voyages of the Discovery*, 223.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 225. Working from the east, advantage could be taken of the prevailing easterly winds

<sup>142</sup> Secretary of External Affairs to Secretary of Finance re: Douglas Mawson Scientific and Exploratory Expedition, 9 September 1929, SAB PM 103/17

<sup>143</sup> A. Grenfell Price, *The Winning of Australian Antarctica: Mawson's B.A.N.Z.A.R.E Voyages 1929-1931. Based on the Mawson Papers* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1962), 74.

<sup>144</sup> Passfield to Minister of External Affairs, 18 December 1929, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1

<sup>145</sup> Memorandum by Mr Steyn, 'Norwegian Claims in the Antarctic', 9 May 1939, SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1.

The United Kingdom thought it prudent to decide on their reaction before this should happen, and concluded that they had no legal grounds on which to object. They felt that the Union might be interested because of its geographical proximity and enquired if they concurred with the United Kingdom view. In the reply, sent on 5 December 1929, the Union stated that they concurred that there were ‘no grounds on which an objection could be raised.’<sup>146</sup> This telegram came to be seen as the document in which the Union officially stated that it was not interested in Antarctica.<sup>147</sup> In spite of this, it is doubtful that it was seen as a policy decision by the South Africans at the time. There was no articulated Antarctic policy in South Africa and decisions took place on an *ad hoc*, idiosyncratic basis. One also gets the impression that the decisions were often made by the bureaucrat dealing with the correspondence. Although the correspondence was usually forwarded to the Minister of External Affairs, the Department of Commerce and Industries, the Treasury and the Department of Defence, there were nothing in the way of an interdepartmental committee or any coordinated response. A few months earlier, in an exchange of letters, on United States activity in Antarctica, it was scribbled in the side-line ‘For who to inform? They don’t seem, to have discovered anything much except(ing) snow!’<sup>148</sup>

This lack of coherent or continuous interest at a high level in Antarctica would seem to become endemic in South Africa. By 1929, British policy in the Antarctic started to move away from the ‘sector principle’ as a basis for sovereignty in the Antarctic and towards ‘effective occupation’ quite explicitly<sup>149</sup> Almost a decade later, it was assumed that South Africa would be able to claim territory based on the contiguity of South Africa with that particular sector of Antarctica between Enderby Land and Coats Land.<sup>150</sup>

There was also not much ground for South Africa to object to Norway’s claims, had they considered it beneficial to do so at the time. Although a couple of proposals with regard to meteorological and other scientific activities had been made, they never really came close to execution. South Africa was represented on the Polar Committee, but their attendance was

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Dodds, “South Africa and the Antarctic,” 33 and Rene Laverde, “The Development, Pursuit and Maintenance of a South African Antarctic Policy: 1926-1988” (MA thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1990).

<sup>148</sup> Marginalia on note of Passfield to Minister of External Affairs, 6 August 1929, BTS 102/2 vol. 1. The letter informed the Dominions that the United Kingdom reminded the United States of their territorial claims following Byrds’ expedition and flights over the Ross Dependency.

<sup>149</sup> Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Committee on British Policy in the Antarctic, Imperial Conference 1926, Committee on British Policy in the Antarctic, 18 November 1926, TNA CAB 32/5.

<sup>150</sup> S.H for Department of External Affairs to Mr Webster, Treasury, “Re. Union and the Antarctic,” 30 January 1935, SAB HEN 2491/455 vol.1.

infrequent. The Norwegians, it would seem, were just more useful to the British in the Antarctic than the South Africans. The Polar Committee continued to decide against proposals from South Africa or for a South African expedition, such as the one by Mills Joyce discussed later. These decisions were mostly based on upholding the Anglo-Norwegian status quo. The apparent lack of urgency for a South African Antarctic policy was also remarked upon in press editorials, calling for a more vigorous approach to Antarctic matters.

### ***Press and public interest in South Africa, 1929–1933***

Broadly speaking, the activities of the *Norvegia* seem to have generally elicited more reaction from the South African press than the Discovery Investigations. During one of the *Norvegia* expeditions, Captain Hjalmar Riser-Larsen dropped a Norwegian flag declaring the annexation of territory within the unoccupied sector.<sup>151</sup> Upon his return, he told the *Cape Times* that the possession of the territory altered the position of Norway in the Antarctic.<sup>152</sup> The activities of Norway in Antarctica caused some alarm in the South African press. In May 1931 an article appeared in *The Automobile* that questioned South African inaction. The author pointed out the ‘value to South Africa of its particular sector of the Antarctic’, notably whaling, and, as quoted earlier, its’ perceived bearing on South African weather.<sup>153</sup> Referring to Larsen’s occupation of the land between Coats Land and Enderby Land, as well as the interest that the Americans was showing in Antarctica, the author urged the Union Government to appeal to the League of Nations. He pointed to Russia’s and Canada’s sector-based claims on the Arctic as the precedent to do so. ‘These Norwegian annexations, it seems, should not be allowed to go by default without an appeal to the League [of Nations],’ the author wrote.<sup>154</sup> An editor’s note at the end of article read: ‘whilst going to press we hear that certain developments have taken place, and that the Government have taken steps with the League of Nations to claim territory on behalf of the Union.’<sup>155</sup> Following up on this note, a journalist from *The Star* approached the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Eric Bodenstein, asking him whether Minister Hertzog<sup>156</sup> was indeed taking such steps. He supposedly answered that ‘it would be ridiculous’ to assume that Hertzog would lodge such a protest.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> He named it Princess Ragnhild land.

<sup>152</sup> C. Wingfield to John Simon, 24 May 1934, TNA CO 78/196/3 (5).

<sup>153</sup> “New Territory for the Union?” 72.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* The question about Norwegian activities was also repeated in syndicated press form in the *Star* and *Cape Times*, amongst others.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Until 1948 the time the Prime Minister also served as Minister of External Affairs.

<sup>157</sup> Editorial, “Wat is Radikuul?” *Ons Vaderland*, (12 May 1931). Clipping in SAB BTS 102/2/1 vol. 1.

The editor of *Die Vaderland*, clearly incensed at the idea that Bodenstern would think it ‘laughable’, noted that

our Prime Minister would be more attentive today about South Africa’s interests than Cecil Rhodes and President Kruger was in the early 1880’s, when the land-wolves of Europe were busy partitioning central Africa. Would it not be rather more ridiculous to assume that the authorities would remain as idle when a country such as Sweden [sic] is busy claiming for themselves a section of Antarctica that geographically and rightly belongs to South Africa?<sup>158</sup>

The editorial then challenged Bodenstern to clarify his reasons for deeming such an action ‘ridiculous.’ From this editorial several things transpired. First was that the technicalities were not that important – although the editorial of 8 May 1931 (4 days previous)<sup>159</sup> correctly referred to the annexing power as Norway, this editorial referred to it as Sweden.<sup>160</sup> The union between Norway and Sweden was formally severed in 1905.<sup>161</sup> It was also quite ironic that Rhodes should be called ‘idle’ as far as imperial ambitions go.<sup>162</sup> Second, the economic importance of Antarctica was emphasised, the potential for science was not mentioned. For the author of this editorial in *Ons Vaderland*, a mouthpiece of the Transvaal nationalists, the nerve that was struck was not necessarily the fact that the Union had not yet ventured into Antarctica, but the implicit criticism of Hertzog that he read in Bodenstern’s answer. It turned into a domestic issue.

The press did not react very strongly to the British attitude to Antarctica either. The title of the article by Isachsen, referred to earlier, ‘My friends in South Africa ask me, “But why do you go there?”’ illustrated to some extent the public perception in South Africa of Antarctica. As *The Automobile* article and the resulting correspondence showed, where the potential importance of sub-Antarctic and Antarctic territories and stations were pointed out, the focus was not on the ‘British treatment of Antarctica’ but on criticising the South African government for its apparent somnolence, neglecting an opportunity for economic expansion.

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<sup>158</sup> Editorial, “Wat is Radikuul?”

<sup>159</sup> Editorial, “Antarctica [sic] en Ons.”

<sup>160</sup> In fact, the expedition only had permission to occupy land for Norway, and not to annex it. There is a difference between the two in terms of claims to sovereignty. Only with the latter could Norway claim sovereignty.

<sup>161</sup> R. Danielsen, S. Dyvrik, T. Grønlie, K. Helle and E.Hovland (translated by M. Drake), *Norway: A History from the Vikings to Our Own Times* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995), 306.

<sup>162</sup> Indeed, the original article in the *Automobile* at least gave Rhodes the credit of securing the “balance of the map”, the two Rhodesias. “New Territory for the Union?” *Automobile*.

It did not make a noticeable appearance in the letter-columns and was quickly turned into a domestic issue in an influential newspaper like *Ons Vaderland*. Other articles rather focussed on their reader's sense for adventure. Bouvet Island, coupled with the 'lost' Thompson Island, was ideally suited for this. A *Cape Times* article on the return of the *Norvegia* expedition of 1928–1929 entitled 'An Island of Mystery: Expedition's Return from Bouvet' mentioned the island's importance to whaling and meteorology. It concentrated, however, on the question of whether the island turned into an iceberg (observing that this puzzle might occupy British Members of Parliament) and asked:

What did they find at Bouvet Island and why did they return so quickly? These were the questions one expected these gentlemen to answer during their few hours' stay in Cape Town. But no. They had received specific instructions to say nothing about their mission of disappointment to the island of mist and mystery.<sup>163</sup>

Some years after establishing its sovereignty over this island of 'mist and mystery', on 14 January 1939, amongst concerns about a German expedition to the area, Norway claimed sovereignty over the territory between the Falkland Island Dependencies at 20°W and the Australian Antarctic Territory, at 44°38'E.<sup>164</sup>

## **Towards a South African Antarctic Policy**

### ***More proposals for a South African Antarctic Expedition***

In this era of increased Antarctic activity, there was not a complete lack of proposals for a South African Antarctic expedition. In 1930, Ernest Mills Joyce, who had served with Shackleton, proposed a South African expedition. He emphasised the economic potential of Antarctica and sought to strike a nationalist nerve by referring to territorial expansion. He planned to 'make the Expedition a purely South African one in the hope that the South African flag will one day be unfurled over those lands lying immediately south of her continent.'<sup>165</sup> The South African High Commissioner, Charles te Water, although interested, referred the matter to the Polar Committee. They disapproved of the plans, pointing out that it

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<sup>163</sup> See folder "Antarctic, Bouvet Island; Jan Mayen Island. Territorial interests in: Norwegian Expedition to: Bouvet Island: Withdrawal of British claim to Island: annexation of Jan Mayen Island by Norway," SAB GG 1342/37/1170; "An Island of Mystery: Expedition's Return from Bouvet," *Cape Times* (23 January 1929).

<sup>164</sup> Incidentally, the German expedition was given logistical support by the Union of South Africa. H.D.J Bodenstein, Secretary for External Affairs to Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the German Reich, 8 February 1939, SAB BTS 102/2 vol.1.

<sup>165</sup> Dubow quotes Bailey as once saying that "I cannot write books but I can write cheques." He was one of patrons of South African science.

could be seen as a breach of faith by the Norwegians, whose ‘friendly cooperation in the Antarctic was of great and increasing importance to His Majesty’s Governments.’<sup>166</sup> Without any protest, South Africa House agreed that support of such an expedition would be inadvisable.<sup>167</sup>

In 1935, more enquiries were made as to the possibilities of sending a South African expedition south, this time by South Africans. One was by the Chief Meteorologist, T.E.W (Theo) Schumann who was interested in Tristan da Cunha, Gough or Bouvet, who wrote to his British counterpart, Gordon Simpson in 1935.<sup>168</sup> Schumann, who was appointed to the position in 1933 was determined to develop the Meteorological Office into a *scientifically* based weather service and was continuously engaged in battles to obtain sufficient funds for this.<sup>169</sup> Simultaneously, Oswald Pirow, Union Minister of Defence, approached Vice-Admiral E.R.G.R Evans, the British Navy Commander at Simonstown (Africa Station) who had travelled south with Scott.<sup>170</sup> Pirow asked Evans whether the Union would gain by erecting and maintaining a meteorological station in the Antarctic and, if so, to suggest a position.<sup>171</sup> Evans, himself an aviator, was of the opinion that, for weather forecasting, Tristan da Cunha, Gough or Bouvet would be most suitable, or a combination of one of them with an Antarctic station. He was aware that the establishment of a weather station would be partly motivated by drought forecasts, but that the Union Defence would also have a strategic interest in improved weather forecasting: ‘Whether from such stations drought could be predicted, as the farmers seem to hope, I cannot say. Certainly in Australia meteorological news seems to be better disseminated – anyway from the seaborne aircraft viewpoint.’<sup>172</sup> Privately, both Simpson and Evans agreed ‘as to the value of such a contribution from South Africa to world

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<sup>166</sup> “Memorandum: Captain E.E. Mills Joyce’s scheme for a South African Antarctic Expedition, 1930-32,” November 1930, TNA DO 35/171/10 (14) Not coincidentally, South Africa just experienced a long period of drought.

<sup>167</sup> H. Andrews, Political Secretary, South Africa House to Under-Secretary of State, Dominions Office, 26 February 1931, TNA DO 35/171/10 (2). Mills Joyce continued to unsuccessfully try for an Antarctic expedition of his own, and one suspects he was more an adventurous opportunist than someone who really had South African interests at heart. In 1934, Mills Joyce proposed yet another expedition, this time to ‘the land discovered by Scott, Ross and Shackleton.’ He approached the Union again but to no avail. Minutes on Captain E. Mills Joyce’s proposed air expedition to the Antarctic, 6 January 1934, TNA DO 35/171/10. Department of External Affairs to Webster “Re: Union and the Antarctic,” 30 January 1935, SAB HEN 2491/455 vol. 1.

<sup>168</sup> T. Schumann, Chief Meteorologist, Department of Irrigation, Union of South Africa to Dr Simpson, Director Meteorological Office, 16 February 1935, TNA BJ 5/30.

<sup>169</sup> Jackson, “Meteorology and Climatology,” 400.

<sup>170</sup> Evans, who was married to a Norwegian and fluent in the language, wrote several books on the subject. He was posted to Africa station, Simon’s Town in 1933.

<sup>171</sup> Evans to Simpson, 28 March 1935, TNA BJ 5/30.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

science – the establishment of a station in the Antarctic.’<sup>173</sup> These plans, however, never went much beyond the seeking of advice.

## The ‘Union and the Antarctic’ Memorandum of 1935

The proposals and enquiries of Schumann and Pirow were not made in a political vacuum and were preceded by the first document resembling a South African Antarctic Policy. In January 1935, a memorandum drawn up by the Department of External Affairs was circulated amongst the departments of Commerce and Industries, Defence and Irrigation (the meteorology office fell under the latter). The memorandum, entitled the ‘Union and the Antarctic’ is the first traceable attempt at a coherent Antarctic policy.<sup>174</sup> It argued that the Union needed to take action in order to avoid ‘exclusion...from this sector, with its alleged riches in minerals, guano, phosphates etc., its possibilities of revenue from whaling and sealing industries, and the opportunities for scientific research.’<sup>175</sup> It was realised that the Union’s ‘acquiescent’ attitude thus far, in addition to the British policy of directing Norwegian interest away from British Antarctica towards the unclaimed sector that geographically overlaps with the ‘South African’ sector,<sup>176</sup> could result in the Union ‘being eventually excluded from the “South African sector.”’<sup>177</sup> It discussed the legal technicalities of territorial claims and concluded that:

[it] appear[s] not to be impossible to review the Union’s attitude. It is, however, purely a question of policy. If the national desire is to extend the activities of the country to enterprises in the Antarctic (which may ultimately yield considerable profit or, on the other hand, fail entirely) is considered strong enough, there would be no insuperable obstacle to a manifestation of particular interest in the “South African Sector” by the government. The geographical contiguity of this sector would undoubtedly be sufficient justification.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Simpson to Evans, 14 May 1935 and Evans to Simpson, 18 June 1935, TNA BJ 5/30 Evans and Simpson were personal friends and had served on expeditions together.

<sup>174</sup> Dodds, “South Africa and the Antarctic,” 35.

<sup>175</sup> S.H for Department of External Affairs, Memorandum “Union and the Antarctic,” 30 January 1935, SAB HEN 2491/455.

<sup>176</sup> It was not usually referred to as the ‘South African’ sector in British documents, but rather as the sector between Enderby Land and the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

<sup>177</sup> S.H for Department of External Affairs, Memorandum “Union and the Antarctic,” 30 January 1935, SAB HEN 2491/455.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.* As mentioned previously, the South Africans seemed to misread the relative coherence of the British Antarctic policy and the move away from the sector principle.

There was a clear emphasis on the potential *economic* value of the Antarctic: '[it will not be too audacious to advocate the desirability of establishing at least one base from which South African enterprise could operate and expand its activities in case future developments justify such a course on purely *economic* basis' (emphasis in original).<sup>179</sup> It was also thought that the Union could perhaps come to some 'arrangement' with Britain and Norway, based on their 'friendly' agreements with one another. In this memorandum, there was no expressed need for territory based on the national prestige and the potential for scientific research was in effect a side note. The matter was referred for discussion to the interdepartmental External Trade Relations Committee.

At the discussion of the External Trade Relations Committee, they called upon J. Collie, who was South Africa's representative at the Polar Committee meeting during the Empire Conference in 1930. Noting that he had not looked into the matter since 1930, he proceeded to explain the British policy in greater detail and pointed out that relying on the 'sector' principle for a wholesale claim would be imprudent, as the regular Norwegian activities demonstrated effective occupation. He recommended that the Union rather consider using the whalers to carry 'one or two' representatives to the continent for the duration of summer. Interestingly, he made a point of adding that this did not mean that men cannot live there the whole year round, indeed many of those who spent a considerable part of their lives in the polar areas 'lived to be very old men'. Nevertheless, the men 'selected would require to become acclimatised and be well equipped against extreme cold.'<sup>180</sup> The Union was certainly man enough for such an expedition.

The 'inhospitable' environment of Antarctica was a recurrent theme. This environment, perhaps to be 'tamed' by 'scientific progress,' was also bedded in a colonial discourse. One official remarked, referred to scientific discovery making the 'settlement of the tropical regions possible' saying the same could be true of Antarctica in the future.<sup>181</sup>

The Committee concluded that the Union should indeed take steps to establish itself in the Antarctic and made enquires if it was possible to use some whaling boat for the purpose.<sup>182</sup> The matter was subsequently taken up with Erik von Bonde of the Fisheries Survey. Irvin and Johnson, declined logistic support as their vessels were not 'strengthened enough' and they

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the External Trade Relations Committee, 29 June 1935, SAB HEN 2491/455.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

did not operate close to the area under consideration, Coats Land. Evans was approached again and he suggested that the Union work through the Discovery Committee. Van Bonde was also careful to note that the Norwegians should be informed at the highest possible level of the South African intentions, as ‘something in the nature of placation may be necessary owing to the advantageous commercial activities of [Norwegian] whalers in South African ports.’<sup>183</sup> One of the ways in which he suggested that might be done was to emphasise the increasing Japanese interest in Antarctic whaling, presumably thinking that the South African involvement could somehow help patrol the waters. Suggestions to utilise the *Discovery II* were followed up, but by the next meeting of the External Trade Relations Committee the topic of ‘South Africa in the Arctic [sic]’ was postponed due to the urgency of another item on the agenda, and there are no traces of subsequent discussions by the External Trade Relations Committee on the item.<sup>184</sup>

The memorandum and the subsequent discussions revealed at least three important aspects of potential South African involvement in Antarctica. First, it was not taken as self-evident that the Union had an interest in Antarctica and second that they were well aware of the fact that trade-links with Norway should be kept in mind. Lastly, although it was considered an important matter, it was not a priority in any way.

## War

There was little new activity in South Africa relating to Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic in the period between the 1935 memorandum and the Second World War. On the eve of war, fearing German activity in the area, Norway declared sovereignty over its claim in the Antarctic. Attached to the correspondence informing the Union of this development, an advisor in the Ministry of Trade summed up the implication for the Union as follows: ‘In brief the position is that the Norwegian Government has by Royal Decree acquired sovereignty over the South African Sector of the Antarctic. This claim is being formally recognised by the United Kingdom Government. The opportunity offering to the Union Government to acquire this territory therefore no longer exists.’<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Von Bonde to Secretary for Commerce and Industries, 14 August 1935, SAB HEN 2491/455.

<sup>184</sup> Loose leaf inserted in “External Trade Relations Committee Meeting,” 31 October 1935, SAB HEN 2491/455.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

During the War, the Polar Committee and Discovery Committee were temporarily suspended and most polar vessels commandeered by the navy. The War also made it clear that neither Antarctica nor the islands could be handled as ‘remote’ anymore, neither physically nor politically.<sup>186</sup>

### **The first South African Antarctic Research Committee, 1944–1946**

In 1944, as hostilities in Europe neared an end the Geological Society of South Africa (GSSA)<sup>187</sup> established the first South African Antarctic Research Committee (SAARC).<sup>188</sup> Dr Lester King, a geologist at the University College of Natal, was appointed chairman. SAARC's aim was to look into the possibility of a South African Antarctic expedition after the War. They proposed a base on Glacier Bay, on the Caird Coast and weather stations on Bouvet as well as, if possible, Gough Island. Their proposed research focus was geology. The proposal cited the work of the South African geologist, A.L (Aleks) du Toit. He played a seminal part in synthesising the theory on ‘continental drift’, a theory described by the GSSA to be as meaningful to geology as ‘evolution was to biology’.<sup>189</sup> According to his theory, the lands which formerly lay east of South Africa now constituted the eastern side of the Weddell Sea, and as such the investigation of that part will ‘be a magnificent contribution to Geology and Palaeontology’.<sup>190</sup> Other fields of study they proposed to undertake were Geophysics, Meteorology and Oceanography. The letter, addressed to the Discovery Committee, also made explicit mention of seeking government recognition and financial assistance at the time of writing.<sup>191</sup>

A deputation from the GSSA visited Smuts who ‘expressed interest in the move and asked the deputation to confine themselves to collecting data for future consideration.’<sup>192</sup> The

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<sup>186</sup> For example Operation Tabarin.

<sup>187</sup> The Geological Society of South Africa and the Cape of Good Hope Geological Survey were established in 1895. It was one of numerous professional societies created during the last decade of that century to advance specialist knowledge and the collective interests of its members. The political background of these organisations was coloured by South Africanism, and the ideology of progressivism. (Dubow, *Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 165). Today, there is no institutional commemoration or recollection of the role played by the GSSA in South Africa’s Antarctic history, which perhaps is a reflection of the lack of public prestige attached to activities in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic in South Africa, in the present as well as the past. (Visit to GSSA head office, Johannesburg, 18 July 2010).

<sup>188</sup> E. Mendelssohn, Honorary Secretary of the Geological Society of South Africa to the Secretary, ‘Discovery’ Committee, “South African Antarctic Research Committee,” 21 September 1944, SAB HEN 2491/455 vol.1.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Secret and Urgent Despatch from the Acting Secretary for External Affairs to the Secretary for Commerce and Industries ‘Discovery Committee,’ 1 December 1944, SAB HEN 2491/455 vol.1.

GSSA also sought to attract role players outside the society, such as Von Bonde<sup>193</sup> and Brigadier B.F.J (Basil) Schonland, scientific advisor to Smuts and the first president of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) that was established in 1946.<sup>194</sup>

Being a private organisation, the committee had many obstacles to overcome, especially because it was still War time. This included, for instance, difficulties in procuring a suitable vessel.<sup>195</sup> The Prime Minister's office was willing to help in so far they could 'at least obtain some information for the Committee'<sup>196</sup> and remained wary of any actions that could imply government approval for a South African expedition.<sup>197</sup>

In November 1944 another of the SAARC committee members, Major F.E Plummer,<sup>198</sup> a Professor in Geography at the University of Pretoria submitted a memorandum proposing a United Nations Expedition to Antarctica to SAARC.<sup>199</sup> The committee recommended that, because Plummer's scheme would clash with King's and because the scope of international cooperation was beyond the GSSA, he should rather place it before 'one of the scientific societies in Great Britain.'<sup>200</sup> Plummer's proposal entailed using the military resources generated by the War as the logistic base from which to launch an immense international expedition to Antarctica, with bases distributed equally around the periphery of the Antarctic continent:

The outstanding merits of this form of attack lay in its topical appositeness at this juncture, its distinct possibility of fulfilment in the present unique circumstances, its comparative assurance of safety, and its provision of a formidable Armada, concomitant with the occupation of strategic bases. If launched on a sufficient scale, this combined

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<sup>193</sup> A.J Adams of the Geological Society of South Africa to Dr C von Bonde, 23 February 1945 and C von Bonde to Secretary for Commerce and Industries "Proposed South African Antarctic Expedition," 17 March 1945, SAB HEN 2491/455 vol.1.

<sup>194</sup> Lester C King, South Africa Antarctic Research Committee to Brigadier B.F.J Schonland , 29 May 1945 and M.A Murray on behalf of B.F.J Schonland to J.D Pohl, Acting Secretary for External Affairs, 8 June 1945. SAB HEN 2491/455 vol.1.

<sup>195</sup> Lester C King, South Africa Antarctic Research Committee to Brigadier B.F.J Schonland, 29 May 1945, SAB HEN 2491/455 vol.1.

<sup>196</sup> M.A Murray on behalf of B.F.J Schonland to J.D Pohl, Acting Secretary for External Affairs, 8 June 1945, SAB HEN 2491/455 vol.1.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Plummer had previously made a study of the reliability of South Africa's rainfall over the long term, hoping to sketch a normal curve for rainfall distribution that can aid in successful farming. Jackson, "Meteorology and Climatology," 398.

<sup>199</sup> F.E. Plummer to J.C. Smuts "A Proposed International (United Nations) Expedition to Antarctica" (16 April 1945). SAB BTS 102/1 vol. 1. The detail as to why Major Plummer submitted this proposal a few months after the King's proposal, of which he must have been aware, is unclear. It does not seem to be the result of professional rivalry.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

operation would furnish the best possible example of the Horizon of Ignorance, surrounding Terra Incognita, diminishing as both retreated before the winged assault of science and the accession of knowledge.<sup>201</sup>

The Major quite literally saw the War as a vehicle for science.<sup>202</sup> He asked for Smuts' permission before he forwarded the proposal to premier geographical societies in Great Britain, the United States of America and Russia.<sup>203</sup>

The proposals of King and Plummer were quite different in strategy, but both emphasised the scientific worth of the expedition and lacked narrow nationalist and territorial motivations. The Union Government expressed its reluctance to support King's expedition if it could not be co-ordinated with expeditions from other countries with interests in the Antarctic. According to them, the cost to South Africa of such an expedition mainly for geological purposes could not be warranted. Moreover, if they were to extend the programme to include meteorological research, they would need wide international cooperation to obtain enough data. Support from Britain was not forthcoming either as an international expedition of that scale might open the door for the Soviet Union to come to the table. In a letter by the Acting Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the High Commissioner in London, he referred to negotiations about an 'Antarctic Polar Year' and the 'difficulties' in securing international cooperation for such a year. Instead, the South African government suggested a similar scheme to be carried out by the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, the United States and South Africa. A post-war Commonwealth Scientific Conference was planned for 1945 or 1946, and South Africa planned to raise the question of this Antarctic investigation at the Conference. They suggested that the High Commissioner inform the Secretary of State for the Colonies of their intention to collect further information and of their 'keen interest in any proposals which can be made by the Discovery Committee.'<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> His employment of militaristic language was not unique either. As will be discussed in future work, the 'blankness' of the Antarctic environment frequently led to the language of 'assault' being used, especially during the IGY. The discourse of assault later made way for the discourse of 'purity' and 'wilderness' – to be kept in stasis, rather than to tame.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. The folder does not contain a copy of the Prime Minister's response, nor are there traces of any further correspondence on the subject of Plummer's proposal. In the context of the embryonic Cold War, it is unlikely that Smuts would have lent his approval. At the time, it was even less likely that Britain, the United States or Soviet Union would consider such a proposal.

<sup>204</sup> SAB HEN 2491/455 vol.1: Acting Secretary for External Affairs to the High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa, 'Discovery Committee: Proposed South African Antarctic Expedition' (16 April 1945).

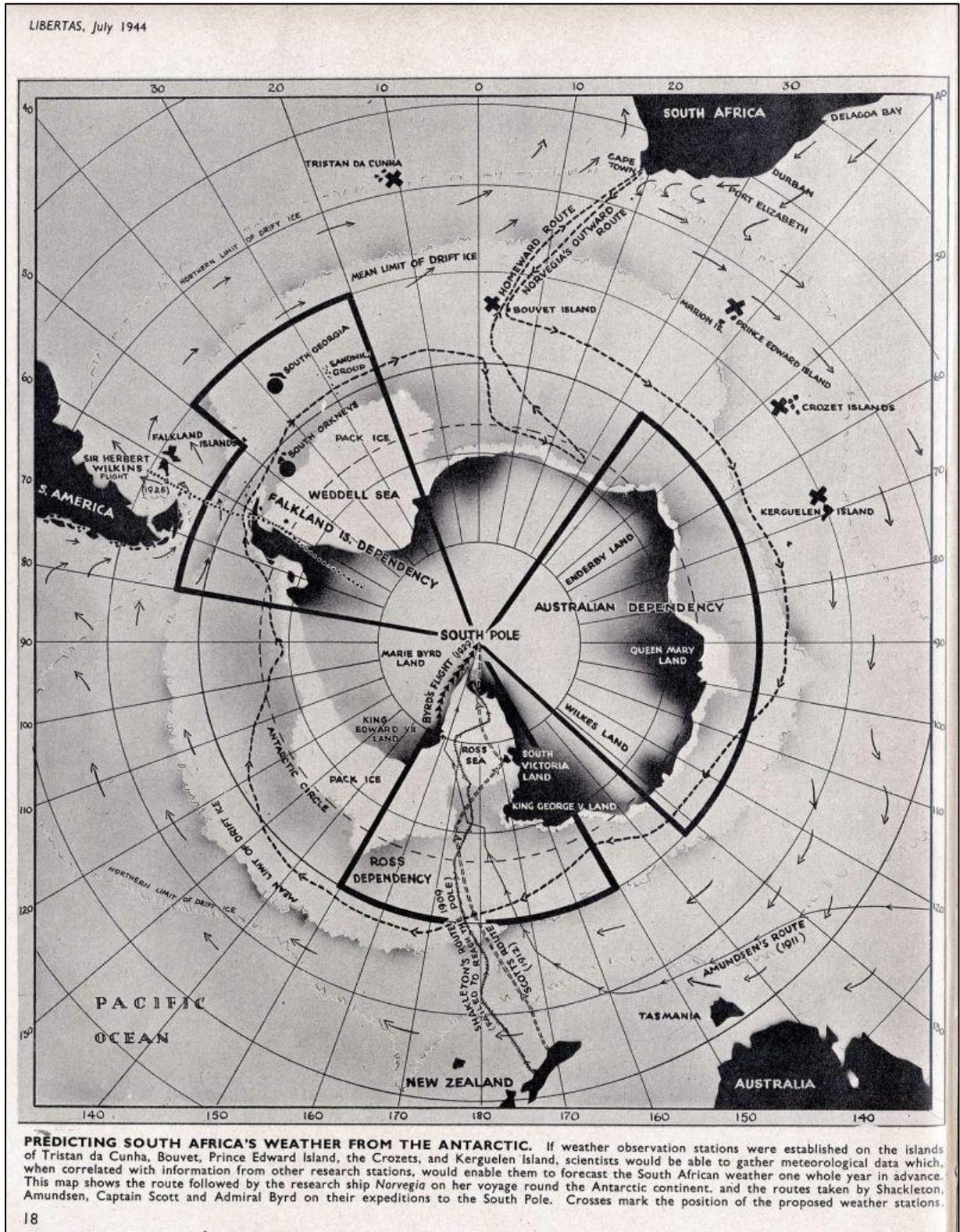


Figure 1.5: Predicting South African weather 'one whole year in advance.' An illustration of the encirclement of Antarctica with weather stations.

Source: (*Libertas*, July 1944)

The Discovery Committee was very much in favour of a joint plan for studying Antarctic meteorology but felt it was difficult to make any detailed proposals until their own post-War position was clarified.<sup>205</sup> In the flurry of correspondence caused by the GSSA proposal between the High Commission in London, the Secretary for External Affairs and the Secretary for Commerce in Industries, made no direct reference to any South African Antarctic policy.<sup>206</sup>

## Conclusion

It is difficult to capture the position of South Africa in terms of Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic in this era other than that it was characterised by a lack of enthusiasm. Interest swelled upon the initiative of certain individuals (such as Schumann) and the presence of others (such as Evans). ‘Science’, even utilitarian science, was not motivation enough. It was only in 1942, for instance, when the conditions of War meant that a weather station in the south Atlantic was of strategic importance, that the South African government in collaboration with the Royal Navy established a meteorological station on Tristan da Cunha. It is also a history where one should be careful not to make a goldfish look like a whale – there were discussions around Antarctica, and they were embedded in the discourse of the time, be it science in the context of a commonwealth or the ‘scientific’ conservation of a species to manage their exploitation. Yet, in South Africa at least, Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic were mostly slotted into existing projects. It was rarely consciously used to promote a specific agenda, but rather as an auxiliary means to an end – it was a side note to the fisheries industry, for instance, or domestic battles against drought. This is not to say that there was a complete lack of interest emanating from the Union and indeed, if one had to pinpoint a running theme it was one that the Union could not and would not consider an expedition without international cooperation. It is easy to view South African history through the lens of the apartheid years of 1948 to 1994 and its reputation as a pariah state. In rhetoric, politicians during the inter-war era may have focussed on South Africa’s status as an independent state, but in practice, on the level of economics and science, it was very much dependent on the strings of Empire. The history of South African involvement in Antarctica

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<sup>205</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Discovery Committee Scientific Subcommittee, 15 May 1945, SAB HEN 2491/455 vol.1.

<sup>206</sup> Amongst others, see: Secret and Urgent Despatch from the Acting Secretary for External Affairs to the Secretary for Commerce and Industries “Discovery Committee,” 1 December 1944 and Acting Secretary for External Affairs to the High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa, “Discovery Committee: Proposed South African Antarctic Expedition,” 16 April 1945, SAB HEN 2491/455 vol.1.

during the inter-war period can then best be read amongst these lines. It is therefore also a history that must be read as reflected from what is ostensibly other countries' histories, such as Norway and Britain. An answer to the question put to Isachsen – 'What do you do down there?' – would then most probably be: 'We are not there, yet.'

## Chapter 2

# Outposts of the Cold War: From the Prince Edward Islands to Antarctica, 1947 – c.1955

### Introduction

Antarctica may have been the only continent with no battle casualties during the Second World War, but the war indelibly altered these ends of the earth as well.<sup>1</sup> Committees such as the Polar Committee and Discovery Committee were temporarily suspended and there was little money and manpower for Antarctic expeditions. *Operation Tabarin* (1943–1945), during which the Royal Navy established a number of bases in the Falkland Island Dependencies, was the major exception.<sup>2</sup> The Cold War world of the 1950s, however, saw new fissures in the politics of the Ice.

It was during the immediate post-war era that South Africa became more formally involved in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic. This period was characterised by intense activity involving the high southern latitudes. Planning an Antarctic or sub-Antarctic expedition usually took several years during which the economic, social and political environment often changed drastically. This meant that an expedition as it was first conceptualised was often realised under different conditions and for different reasons. There were also frequent overlaps between expeditions, their members and advisors used, leading to some cross-pollination between expeditions. The 1950s saw relatively few individuals involved at a policy level who formed a network of their own. Moreover, the final shape expeditions took was often influenced by global incidents far away.

The next two chapters will discuss South Africa's involvement (and non-involvement) in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic from its occupation of the Prince Edward Islands to the signing of the Antarctic Treaty. Broadly speaking, Antarctic histories in the post-War era played out

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<sup>1</sup> The war was also fought in the Southern Oceans. The German raiders, for example, used the Kerguelen Islands in the Southern using the Kerguelen Islands in the southern Indian Ocean for “hide-and-seek” warfare. The Germans also targeted Norwegian whalers. William A Breisemeister and Douglas V Waugh *Antarctica* (The New Zealand Antarctic Society, 1965), 47 and William James Mills, *Exploring Polar Frontiers: a Historical Encyclopaedia: Volume 1* (Oxford: ABC Clio 2003),346

<sup>2</sup> During the operation, Chilean and Argentinean marks of sovereignty removed. After the War, *Tabarin* was transformed into a civilian organisation: the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, a precursor to the British Antarctic Survey. Klaus Dodds, *Pink Ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002).

in the changing spatial frameworks of the empire, the nation state and the global Cold War. This chapter will start with a short contextualisation of the Cold War background in terms of Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic. It will then proceed to discuss events revolving around three interrelated themes. First, South Africa's occupation of the Prince Edward Islands in 1948 will be discussed as a response to emerging strategic issues in the aftermath of WWII on the one hand, and a renegotiation of South Africa's role in empire and nationalist responses to empire on the other. Secondly, this chapter will elaborate on the initial proposals for the internationalisation of Antarctica, through formal agreements as well as scientific expeditions and South Africa's reactions to this. Finally, the chapter will discuss how individual technocrats, in this case T.E.W Schumann and Allan Crawford, attempted to use the sub-Antarctic Islands to build their own empires of meteorological knowledge.

## **Antarctica and the Sub-Antarctic at the Onset of the Cold War**

The post-War polarisation of the world into the communist world, dominated by the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the western world, led by the United States (US), had a pervasive influence in the foreign policies (and many domestic policies) of countries around the globe.<sup>3</sup> Antarctica and the Islands were also brought under its sphere of activity and there was a noticeable increase in military, strategic and economic interest in the continent.<sup>4</sup>

The increased military significance was at its most visible during the American *Operation Highjump* of 1947–1948. It comprised some 3,000 men and a strong naval presence. It was a key demonstration of American presence in the Antarctic and 'a clear statement that the United States had replaced Britain as the leading technological and scientific power in the Southern Continent'.<sup>5</sup> *Highjump* also brought Antarctica into the theatre the Cold War, a rehearsal stage for military manoeuvres in an environment that was seen to approximate the

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) and Sue Onslow, ed. *Cold War in Southern Africa: White power, black liberation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Howkins also made the important point that this 'scramble for Antarctica' was not inevitable and had as much to do with previous interest in the continent as it had, for instance, with the election of nationalist leaning governments in South America. Adrian J. Howkins, "Frozen Empires: A History of the Antarctic Sovereignty Dispute Between Britain, Argentina, and Chile, 1939-1959," (PhD dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, 2008), 175.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 128.

Arctic but that was not as politically sensitive.<sup>6</sup> For some Antarctic powers, in particular Norway, Britain and the US, Soviet actions in the Antarctic had Arctic implications, because they feared events at the one pole might set a precedent for the other.<sup>7</sup> The British naval presence was institutionalised as the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS) under the Colonial Office. The Royal Navy first established their presence during *Operation Tabarin*, a WWII operation to prevent the Argentineans and Chileans from encroaching on British territory as well as to prevent raiders from using the Antarctic Islands as bases. The British government was concerned that its legal position in the Dependencies was weakening as it was making little use of the Islands. Commonwealth support was thought crucial in maintaining its title to the Falkland Islands Dependencies (FID). Hence, the United Kingdom also consulted the dominions with Antarctic claims, Australia and New Zealand, as well as South Africa and even Canada, about its south Atlantic Empire, encouraging increased participation from these dominions.<sup>8</sup>

The War itself and the subsequent military-industrial complex that characterised the ensuing Cold War, led to new technological possibilities such as long range flights. Even more importantly long-range missiles eroded the distance between Antarctica and the rest of the world. Further exploration of the Antarctic continent in the early 1950s lent further credence to the Gondwana land thesis. The implicit geological continuities encouraged speculation that the mineral resources of South America, Australia and South Africa can be extrapolated to Antarctica. This included strategically valuable minerals in a nuclear age, such as uranium.<sup>9</sup> On the economic front, there was a temporary increase in the demand for whale-oil, following the stock depletions of the War.<sup>10</sup> It should, however, be kept in mind that for most countries (with the possible exception of Argentina and Chile) Antarctica was not a foreign policy priority.<sup>11</sup> In South Africa, operational decisions were often left to men like Theo E.W. Schumann and Alan B. Crawford. Furthermore, science steadily gained in prominence in the

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<sup>6</sup> The argument was that a number of countries, including the Soviet Union, stretched into the Arctic (Russia is, for instance, not all that far removed from Alaska.) The Arctic regions were also inhabited, albeit sparsely, by various groups. Peter J. Beck, *The International Politics of Antarctica* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), 37.

<sup>7</sup> Beck, *The International Politics of Antarctica*, 40

<sup>8</sup> In this context, it should also be remembered that Argentina remained neutral during the War, which coloured its relationship with the United States and the United Kingdom. Klaus Dodds, *Pink Ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 17. This book provides an excellent account of the post-War British imperial history in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic.

<sup>9</sup> Beck, *The International Politics of Antarctica*, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Howkins, "Frozen Empires," 104.

<sup>11</sup> See Howkins, "Frozen Empires" on the relatively high profile Antarctica had in Argentinean and Chilean policy in the period 1939-1959.

Antarctic throughout the 1940s and 1950s. But, as Beck also argued, the emphasis on science also led to major political developments.<sup>12</sup> Within the framework of empire and geopolitical strategies, coupled with emerging technologies of science, South Africa extended its territory over two islands in the southern Indian Ocean.

## The Occupation of the Prince Edward Islands, 1945–1948

### *The Prince Edward Islands and its legal title after WWII*

The sub-Antarctic islands, including Marion and Prince Edward, are places on the fringe. They are on the edges of the sub-Antarctic convergence as well as the Southern Oceanic Rim countries.<sup>13</sup> Their legal status was precarious, bordering on *terra nullius* but not quite, as they have been sporadically visited, exploited and leased. In the post-World War II world, boundaries in Europe and throughout the Empire were being redrawn and rules with regards to rights of occupation and sovereignty were redrafted. There were, however a few places in the world that were yet without a human sovereign that became chess pieces in the battle between the East and the West for geopolitical influence. The Prince Edward Islands as well as Heard and MacDonald Islands, were pawns not yet firmly in the hands of either. Ownership was, quite literally, an issue of raising a flag on the Island group.<sup>14</sup> Superficially, they were British. In internal correspondence the British recognised that their claim was not formal and based on the fragmented paper trail left by companies applying for sealing and guano concessions.<sup>15</sup> Other countries had neither annexed nor occupied the Island group. They did not acknowledge the Island group as belonging to Britain either. The French *Bougainville* expedition of 1929, for example, did not apply specifically for permission to include the Prince Edward Islands in their scientific survey.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Beck, *The International Politics of Antarctica*, 41. He referred specifically to the IGY, to be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> The term 'Southern Oceanic Rim' was coined by Klaus Dodds. It includes Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Chile, India and South Africa. Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics in Antarctica: views from the Southern Oceanic Rim* (John Wiley & Sons: Chichester, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> As W.B Newton, who was granted a concession in 1906, 'apparently never hoisted the British flag' or '[made] any use of his concession', the Foreign Office felt doubt could be cast on Britain's claim to the Islands. In 1926, part of the lease agreement with Kerguelen Sealing and Whaling Company, was that they should display the British Flag. Brian J Roberts, "Territorial Claims in the Antarctic," Government Printer, United Kingdom, 1 May 1945, SAB BTS 103/14 AJ 1945.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> "Possible Establishment of South African Sovereignty over Prince Edward Islands," March 1947, SAB BTS 1/96/1 vol.1. The *Bougainville* organising committee was, however, aware that there could be issues and directed them not to leave any traces behind should they succeed in landing. "Extract from 'Au Seuil de l'Antarctique Croisières du 'Bougainville' by Dr. René Jeannel: Paris: Editions du Museum rue 57 Cavier (ve), 1941, SAB BLO 287 PS 16/4 vol.1.

In November 1945, during one of the first meetings after the War, the Polar Committee reconsidered the status of Britain's austral empire, including the Prince Edward Islands, Heard Island and the McDonald Islands. The Polar Committee, established in 1926, was regarded as the authoritative body on sub-Antarctic and Antarctic matters in the British Commonwealth. South Africa, whose Antarctic expertise was almost non-existent, took its cue from the Polar Committee's advice in matters of Antarctic science and policy (see chapter one). At this particular meeting of the Polar Committee, it was acknowledged that Britain had little more than an inchoate title to these islands, and even that had little substance. The Committee recommended two possible remedies. First, was to attach the Prince Edward Islands to the Falkland Islands Dependencies. This inhabited island group however, was some 4,000 miles of ocean removed from the Prince Edward Islands. The second option was to attach the Prince Edward Islands to South Africa, 1,200 miles away.<sup>17</sup> In this way, the islands would still be part of the British Commonwealth for administrative purposes, without being an extra burden on the Falkland Islands Dependencies. Based on its experiences with the meteorological station on Tristan da Cunha, the South African military was also considering setting up meteorological observatories on Gough and Marion Island.<sup>18</sup> These islands could be useful in terms of aviation and patrolling the Southern Ocean. Smuts was, however, not keen on the Islands being attached to South Africa at the time.<sup>19</sup> The reasons for this were not stated, but it was probably due to the prohibitive cost and lack of an existing maritime exploration infrastructure (which was partly why he did not agree to previous proposals).<sup>20</sup> He also had political pre-occupations on the domestic front (the challenge from the nationalists) as well as on the international front (he was closely involved with the establishment of the United Nations, for instance). Moreover, in 1945, although the tension between the communist and western regimes was already palpable, the Iron Curtain was yet to be drawn. For the time being, no action was taken with regard to the Prince Edward Islands.

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<sup>17</sup> Heard Island would then be attached to Australia, which was 4200 miles closer to that Island than the Falklands. Chadwick, Secretary of the Polar Committee, Note by the Secretary to Minutes of Polar Committee, 15 March 1947, SAB BLO 287 PS 16/4 vol. 1.

<sup>18</sup> P. van Ryneveld, Chief of General Staff to D.D. Forsyth, Secretary for External Affairs, 22 August 1945, SAB BTS 102/2/6 vol.1.

<sup>19</sup> D.D Forsyth, Secretary for External Affairs to P. van Ryneveld, Chief of General Staff, 12 September 1945, SAB BTS 102/2/6 vol.1.

<sup>20</sup> See chapter one on the Geological Society of South Africa's proposal for an Antarctic expedition.

### ***Deciding on a sovereign for the Prince Edward Islands***

In 1947, the Polar Committee's agenda again tabled the question of Heard and MacDonal and the Prince Edward Islands. One reason for this, explicitly mentioned in the correspondence, was that events in the Pacific Ocean could influence the shipping and air routes between Britain, South Africa and Australia. This highlighted the location of these Island groups in the neighbouring Indian Ocean.<sup>21</sup> Another factor was the enquiry of a British businessman into the legal status of the islands, with a view on commercial exploitation. The request put the Colonial Office in a difficult position, as answering the request would put their uncertainty in the public domain.<sup>22</sup> The Polar Committee, to which the question was referred, used the opportunity to push for a quicker resolution on the legal stops that would have to be pulled for the Islands to be 'transferred (if such it can be called)'.<sup>23</sup> The bracketed clause highlighted the uncertainty about the legal status of the Islands.

At the second semester Polar Committee meeting in 1947, the suggestion that they should annex the Islands was put to the South Africans for a second time. The Union representative, Don B Sole, initially said that he thought it unlikely that his government would be interested in the Islands but that 'no doubt they would want to study the meteorology involved'.<sup>24</sup> Subsequent interdepartmental discussions between the Departments of Transport, Defence, External Affairs, and Trade and Industries, led to the conclusion that the Prince Edward Islands were after all of their concern. The South Africans relayed three reasons for this conclusion. First, they emphasised the potential for a meteorological station. Although Gough Island would be more useful to forecast weather for South Africa, some of the sporadic but fierce frontal systems occasionally passed the Prince Edward Islands before reaching South Africa's east coast. Secondly, no direct air route existed between South Africa and Australia.

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<sup>21</sup> It was felt that, if the main Empire route to the East was broken 'by enemy occupation or domination of India', a route with staging points at some of the sub-Antarctic islands and on the Antarctic continent was considered of 'first rate importance'. In 1945, when the Air Ministry of Britain first considered the Antarctic from the point of view of air transport, this was considered a remote contingency. Events on the Indian subcontinent, eventually culminating in its partition and independence, turned it into 'a contingency which must now be studied with much more serious attention'. "Possible Establishment of South African Sovereignty over Prince Edward Islands," March 1947, SAB BTS 1/96/1 vol.1.

<sup>22</sup> L.H. Clare-Burt to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 25 July 1947, SAB BLO 287 PS16/4 vol.1. Lindsay Clare-Burt applied for a five-year concession for sealing on the Prince Edward Islands, in view of the 'world shortage of fats and oils'. Clare-Burt took pains to emphasise that he was 'born of British parents [in] Auckland, New Zealand' and living in Cape Town. He was evidently under the impression that his being a British subject, that repaired South African and Royal Navy vessels during the Second World War, would count in his favour.

<sup>23</sup> Colonial Office to E.E. Crowe, Commonwealth Relations Office 'Prince Edward Islands', 15 September 1947, SAB BLO 287 PS16/4 vol.1 and "Possible Establishment of South African Sovereignty over Prince Edward Islands," March 1947, SAB BTS 1/96/1 vol.1.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Polar Committee, 13 March 1947, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 3.

A station on the Prince Edward Islands could provide the necessary dependable radio systems and meteorological data for operating a safe air route between the two countries. Lastly, there were military considerations.<sup>25</sup> This included the perceived threat that an enemy could launch a missile attack on Cape Town or Port Elizabeth from the Islands.<sup>26</sup>

The perception of the islands' strategic location was ultimately the motive behind the South Africa's interest in occupying the Islands. They were particularly wary of possible security threats in the Antarctic, especially the perceived exposure to the Soviet Whaling Fleet and the fact that there was 'nothing to prevent the Russian occupation' of the Islands.<sup>27</sup> For reasons of policy, however, the South African government thought it best that the occupation should appear 'a purely civil matter, i.e. for meteorological purposes', whilst privately acknowledging that 'it was actually and essentially a defence measure that was carried out for strategic purposes'.<sup>28</sup> They also agreed that if South Africa decided to annex the Islands, they would only inform parliament afterwards when the acquisition of territory had to be approved. In parliament, the emphasis was to fall only on the meteorological aspects.<sup>29</sup> The reasons behind the high level of secrecy were not divulged in the documents. It seemed to have been taken for granted. This is not surprising considering the military nature of the operation and the general atmosphere of secrecy that prevailed. Probably, they also wanted to avoid a situation where the Soviets could pre-empt them. In light of the domestic political backlash discussed later in this chapter, it is arguable they did not want to inform parliament about the real motivation in order to avoid the issue being mired in domestic political affairs. Specifically, they wanted to avoid the accusation of imperialism when a large segment of the voters carried anti-imperialist sentiments. There was, however, no tangible indication that this was indeed a factor in keeping it secret from parliament.

The eventual discussions between General Smuts and British Prime Minister Clements Attlee, as well as their respective Ministers of Defence, were more frank with regards to the

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<sup>25</sup> D.B Sole to the High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa, 13 August 1947, SAB BLO 287 PS16/4 vol.1.

<sup>26</sup> Polar Committee Minutes of Meeting, 14 November 1945 and 13 March 1947, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 3. G. Hewitson, South Africa House to Chadwick, C.R.O, 22 August 1947 and Aide Memoire, November 1947, SAB BTS 1/96/1 vol.1. Although the reality of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles was still a decade away, the Islands were not that far removed from South Africa that the threat of a long range missile such as those used by the Nazis during the War were thought improbable. MIRV's (Multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles) especially caused panic.

<sup>27</sup> "Control of Marion Island: Historical Appreciation of Marion Island," August 1951, SANDFA AG (3) 276/1.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. As will be seen later in this chapter, the South African Press were not fooled.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

strategic considerations. Smuts told Attlee that South Africa wanted to take over the Prince Edward Islands as they could be useful as an air station and because ‘if they were in other hands, they [were] in dangerous proximity to South Africa.’<sup>30</sup> Attlee was advised by the British Defence Minister that, although an air station on Marion would be a risky and unwise undertaking; these Islands would be of little strategic value to Britain if they did not have South Africa’s cooperation. Moreover, as they were in the vicinity of the ocean trade routes between South Africa and Australia, they did not wish ‘these Islands to fall into the hands of a potentially hostile power.’<sup>31</sup> To Britain, the hostile power referred to here could have been the Soviets or perhaps the thorn in their south Atlantic flesh, Argentina. In light of growing South African fears about communism, they almost certainly referred to hostile communist hands.

On 25 November 1947, the Secretary of External Affairs in South Africa, D.D Forsyth, received confirmation that ‘the United Kingdom government have no objection to [the Union’s] immediate occupation and effective administration of Prince Edward Islands.’<sup>32</sup> Following one last interdepartmental meeting, the Director of the South African Naval Forces ordered Lieutenant Commander John Fairbairn to take the whaler SAS *Transvaal* south.<sup>33</sup>

### **Operation SNOEKTOWN December 1947 – August 1948.**

After taking two years to mull over the question of South Africa’s occupation of the Prince Edward Islands, the eventual operation, code-named ‘SNOEKTOWN’ was organised within two days.<sup>34</sup> Men were recalled from shore leave early that holiday season.<sup>35</sup> The level of secrecy remained very high and only when they were clear of the breakwater did the captain inform the men of their destination. In line with the motivation behind occupying the Islands, the ship’s complement was joined by men with special duties. They had to investigate the natural resources of the Island with an eye on its settlement. They also had to note prevailing

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<sup>30</sup> South Africa 1947, Personal Minute Prime Minister of United Kingdom to United Kingdom Minister of Defence, 19 November 1947, TNA PREM 8/666.

<sup>31</sup> South Africa 1947 Joint Planning Staff, “Prince Edward Islands – Strategic Importance,” 24 November 1947, TNA PREM 8/666.

<sup>32</sup> South Africa House to D.D. Forsyth, 25 November 1947, SAB BTS 1/96/1 vol.1.

<sup>33</sup> “Operation ‘SNOEKTOWN’ Confirmation of Verbal Orders Dated 19 December 1947,” SAB BTS 1/96/1 vol.1.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Snoektown’ was the name of a popular humorous radio feature. J. Marsh, *No Pathway Here*. (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1948) <http://rapidtp.co.za/pathway/chap13.html>

<sup>35</sup> The rush to get everything ready is recounted in J. Marsh, *No Pathway Here*. In an article series published in 1954, Bob Grindley wrote that it was ‘somebody’s baby to locate twenty dozen beers – or else!’ After all, they wanted to conform ‘to the traditions of a Naval Christmas’, as Captain Fairbairn would put in his report. See B. Grindley, ‘Marion *Kommando* (May 1954), 17 and John Fairbairn, ‘Operation SNOEKTOWN,’ 14 January 1948, STNM Misc.

weather patterns for purposes of aviation.<sup>36</sup> This included a general engineering reconnaissance of the Islands, including available building material, fresh water sources and the nature of soil in relation to infrastructure development with specific reference to Air Force requirements.<sup>37</sup> They were also to make initial assessments about the possibility of a landing strip on land or an anchorage for a flying boat.<sup>38</sup> Joe A. King, head of forecasting of the South African Weather Bureau, accompanied the *Transvaal* to advise on meteorological aspects, specifically for purposes of aviation. Apart from scouting for the purposes of possible military installations, it was also necessary, by international law, to demonstrate active occupation in order for sovereignty to be recognised. Active occupation on uninhabited Islands in the sub-Antarctic that would be difficult to make self-sustainable, were usually made 'effective' by producing weather data.

On 29 December 1947 Captain Fairbairn raised the Union of South Africa's flag on Marion Island and on 4 January 1948 the procedure was repeated on Prince Edward Island.<sup>39</sup> Only the Union flag of South Africa was raised and no reference was made to the fact that the islands were perhaps under the Union Jack. Later, in parliament, the Minister of Transport would insist that South Africa acted on its own, without prompting from Britain.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps jocularly, but not politically innocent, the Islands were also code-named 'William' and 'Orange', probably referring to William III of England, the Dutch Stadtholder who became king of England<sup>41</sup>

Even though there were very few men and no 'savages' to witness it, it was deemed imperative that ownership over the Islands had to be physically and elaborately performed on site.<sup>42</sup> The flag-raising ceremonies established inchoate rights, which had to be followed up by actual occupation. The flag-raising consisted of the Captain and as many men as could be mustered in the sub-Antarctic weather, rowing ashore on the rubber dinghy and wading through the thick kelp surrounding these Islands to the closest landfall, planting a metal flag

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid. The weather observations were made by J.A. King, head of forecasting of the South African Weather Bureau. He later went on to represent South Africa on the NBSX, discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>37</sup> "Operation 'SNOEKTOWN' Confirmation of Verbal Orders," 19 December 1947, SAB BTS 1/96/1 vol.1. This was done by Captain Andersen of the South African Engineering Corps.

<sup>38</sup> "Report on Visit to Prince Edward and Marion Islands by Captain Broadhurst, S.A.A.F.," 17 January 1948, SANDFA D.G.A.F. S/42/48/2. This was done by Captain Broadhurst of the South African Air Force.

<sup>39</sup> John Fairbairn, "Operation SNOEKTOWN," 14 January 1948, STNM Misc.

<sup>40</sup> HANSARDS (8 March 1948), 2896. The Minister of Transport at the time of annexation was F.C Sturrock. He became Minister of Finance soon afterwards.

<sup>41</sup> "Operation 'SNOEKTOWN' Confirmation of Verbal Orders," 19 December 1947, SAB BTS 1/96/1 vol.1.

<sup>42</sup> On rites of conquest, see David Day, *Conquest: How Societies Overwhelm Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) especially chapter four.

claiming the Island in the name of ‘His Majesty’s Government of the Union of South Africa’.<sup>43</sup> The Captain then solemnly read the deed of sovereignty and made sure that there was a decent photographic record that the ‘ceremony had been properly performed’.<sup>44</sup> Similar ceremonies were performed all over Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic. In an uninhabited, mostly unknown environment they seemed rather incongruous to the parties performing them.<sup>45</sup> The places could not be inhabited by subjugating a native population – an act that was in any case coming under scrutiny in the post-World War, post- Atlantic Charter world that would soon decolonise rapidly.<sup>46</sup> What remained was for these sites to be inhabited first by paper instruments and later junior civil servants. Although at the site they were located these ceremonies were of little significance, they were deemed necessary performances to bring these places into the fold of the bureaucracy of the nation state, whether it was located in Pretoria or London, Canberra or Buenos Aires.

Instead, the Union authorities were anxious to confirm the Islands’ *effective* occupation and plans to construct a semi-permanent settlement were drawn up in Pretoria whilst the annexation party was still at sea. By 3 January, alarmed at press leaks about the Unions’ new ‘colony’, Pretoria instructed Captain Fairbairn to leave behind an occupation party of fourteen men, who had to stay in hastily erected tarpaulin tents on Marion until the occupation party arrived.<sup>47</sup> The men who stayed behind were to conduct some initial surveying and to inform any foreign power that might land on the Island in the meantime that it has already been annexed by the Union of South Africa. They were, however, to avoid any incidents. The SAS *Natal* was expected to arrive with the occupation party within two weeks but, it still being a largely unknown environment, the men were left with enough rations for two months, just in case.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Only one, Petty Officer Steward Schott, joined Fairbairn on Marion whilst the rest waited in the boat, none could join him on Prince Edward Island. The word ‘annexed’ was used in official communication within South Africa without ambiguity, although it was technically not the right term. In communication between South Africa House and the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), the term ‘transfer of sovereignty’ was used. Although this may seem a technical point, it is significant in that it demonstrates to what extent South Africa acted as an agent of Empire versus out of its own initiative.

<sup>44</sup> Marsh, *No Pathway here*.

<sup>45</sup> Tom Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 21.

<sup>46</sup> On the complexities of imperialism in an age of decolonization see Wm. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, “The Imperialism of Decolonization,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 22,3 (1994), 462-511.

<sup>47</sup> “Mystery of S.A. Frigate solved: Union Flag Planted on Island in Southern Indian Ocean,” *Rand Daily Mail* (3 January 1948) and “S. Africa’s Newest Colony,” *Sunday Express*, 4 January 1948, SPRI MS 1531/15.

<sup>48</sup> John Fairbairn, “Orders for Landing Party,” 4 January 1948, STNM Misc.

South Africa was no thalassocracy, or ‘sea-empire’, and wished to avoid drawing attention to the military nature of the occupation. Thus, the task of co-ordinating the first South African expedition to the Prince Edward Islands was assigned to the only department with some administrative experience in this regard. The Department of Transport recently took over the administration of the Tristan da Cunha meteorological office from the British and South African naval forces. As the Weather Bureau was its responsibility, the Department of Transport would preside over the meteorological station that was to demonstrate the effective use and administration of the Prince Edward Islands.<sup>49</sup> All the same, the coordinating officers still had very little knowledge of occupying uninhabited little islands, their environment, seas and the logistical requirements for their settlement and exploration. Although the South African government wanted to avoid linking the Islands to empire, they were reliant on its’ knowledge systems. They depended on whatever information A.H (Anthony) Hamilton, the political secretary at South Africa House, could gather in Britain in the space of a few days.<sup>50</sup> The Union authorities also enlisted the help of A.B (Allan) Crawford, who came highly recommended by Brian Roberts.<sup>51</sup> Roberts was widely credited as the most influential person in British Antarctic policy.<sup>52</sup> Crawford, a British immigrant and meteorologist, had previous sub-Antarctic expedition experience. He became involved in Norwegian-led expedition to Tristan da Cunha as a meteorologist and amateur surveyor after a chance meeting with the expedition on a South African bound passenger ship. During this expedition he became an advocate for establishing a meteorological station on Gough Island, 400 kilometres from Tristan da Cunha. He also became closely involved with the population of Tristan da Cunha.<sup>53</sup> In fact, he was on Tristan da Cunha when the South African authorities asked if he was prepared to lead the first Union expedition to Marion Island. They also wanted his assistance in organising six Tristan men to help with the construction of the ‘SNOEKTOWN’ settlement’ on Marion Island. It was believed that the Tristanians would be particularly

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<sup>49</sup> J.D Pohl for the Secretary of External Affairs to United Kingdom High Commissioner, Cape Town, 16 April 1946, TNA CO 937/8/9 (7).

<sup>50</sup> Note of a discussion between Brian B Roberts of the Polar Research Institute, 22 December 1947, SAB BLO 287 PS 16/4 vol.1

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Brian Roberts was director of SPRI and research officer for polar affairs in the F.O. Amongst other things; he is credited by the British for inspiring the Antarctic Treaty. See Klaus Dodds, *Pink Ice*, 17 and Peder Roberts, “Field of Frozen Dreams: Science, Strategy and the Antarctic in Norway, Sweden and the British Empire 1912-1952” (PhD dissertation, University of Stanford, Stanford, 2010), 237.

<sup>53</sup> The expedition took place from 1937-38. It was a private expedition. Extract from *Geographical Journal*, 195, 5/6 (May/June 1945), 226 in SAB BLO 287 PS16-4 vol.1. For more on Crawford’s involvement with Tristan da Cunha see Allan Crawford *Tristan da Cunha and the Roaring Forties* (Cape Town: David Philip and Charles Skilton, 1982)

helpful with ‘problems of local sea-faring and existence’ in the Roaring Forties.<sup>54</sup> In dealing with the reliance of South Africa on British expertise, it should also be remembered that this was an essentially maritime affair. Maritime culture in South Africa was largely dominated by Englishmen on the upper deck and politically disenfranchised coloured crew in the forecastle, men who would presumably have much less scruples in relying on British advice. By the time the occupation party and the Tristanians left for Marion, ‘SNOEKTOWN’ was not a secret anymore.

### **South African reactions to the new acquisition**

A couple of astute journalists noticed that something extraordinary was happening before the SAS *Transvaal* even reached the Islands. The *Rand Daily Mail* reported on 22 December 1947 that the *Transvaal* left in all secrecy the previous day.<sup>55</sup> It can be argued that the fact that it was the holiday season, when not much else was happening, made it great copy for the festive season, a story of mystery and adventure. In fact a *Star* editorial called it the ‘finest holiday mystery for years.’<sup>56</sup> At this time, it was already known that the Australians were on their way to establish a scientific station on Heard Island, which they formally claimed on 28 December 1947.<sup>57</sup> There was a rumour that the *Transvaal* was racing to the assistance of the Australians on Heard. Another rumour, which fitted in well with the cooling East-West relationship, was that South Africa was racing the Russians to Antarctica to plant a flag on a hitherto unclaimed region.<sup>58</sup> It was, however, not universally believed. The *Star*, for example, reported (albeit erroneously), that there was no unclaimed part of the continent. They also disparaged the idea that the Union would take on the much larger Soviet Union over the body of a ‘disputed whale’.<sup>59</sup>

The speculation was based on inference from other current events (Heard Island) and also mirrored wider concerns at the time, especially the Soviet threat. Also of interest, and to an extent reflective of public perception, was what was not speculated about. Throughout, no

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<sup>54</sup> Cablegram from Secretary of External Affairs to Scallan, 23 December 1947, SAB BLO 287 PS 16/4 vol. 1. The Tristanians would also be ‘properly fed and accommodated’. The U.K authorities pointed out that they should be compensated as well: Cablegram from Scallan to Secretary for External Affairs, 24 December 1947, BLO 287 PS 16/4 vol. 1. One of the reasons the United Kingdom government did not transfer Tristan da Cunha to Union administration was because of their ‘mixed race’ and uncertainty about how they would be treated.

<sup>55</sup> “Secret Orders”

<sup>56</sup> “South Sea Mystery”

<sup>57</sup> John Chadwick, Secretary, Polar Committee to Commonwealth Relations Office “Polar Committee: Heard Island,” 6 January 1947, SAB BLO 287 PS 16/4 vol.1.

<sup>58</sup> Note the Under-Secretary of External Affairs, 22 December 1947, SAB BTS 1/96/1 vol.1.

<sup>59</sup> “South Sea Mystery”

mention was made that South Africa could also have in mind establishing a *scientific* station like the Australians. This was indeed not the case – a meteorological station was seen as one where the weather was observed, not where scientific research was done. But it can be said that the role of science in the post-war world was probably not yet as entrenched in the South African public mind as it was in Britain or Australia. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, South Africa's first major state-funded techno-scientific research body, which was, modelled on the older Australian equivalent, was for example only two years old.<sup>60</sup>

The first journalist to uncover the facts behind the sudden departure of the *Transvaal* was J.H (John) Marsh, maritime reporter for the *Argus* and a personal friend of Smuts and his private secretary.<sup>61</sup> On 3 of January 1948 the news that the Union occupied two islands captured the weekend headlines. The government was not forthcoming with information. Newspapers were left to draw their own conclusions. Their interpretation of events and editorial commentary were telling of current events as well as public opinion. The English newspapers tended to focus on the geopolitical significance of the annexation. Coinciding as it did with the occupation of Heard Island; the newspapers placed emphasis on the Prince Edward Islands fitting into a 'long chain of southern defence islands stretching around the world.'<sup>62</sup> Or, as the *Times* in London noted, 'the chain of islands between 35 and 55 degrees south encircling the Antarctic are now all in the possession of Western Powers.'<sup>63</sup> This lent itself well to graphic illustration, as seen in figure 2.1. The finer details still escaped the educated press men. Some articles added that South African and Australian *island personnel* will

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<sup>60</sup> Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa 1820-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 147.

<sup>61</sup> John Marsh's book-length account of the events was called *No Pathway Here*. Mike Marsh is in charge of his father's vast photo and document collection, which includes video footage of the 'annexation'. John Marsh was also the author of the more famous *Skeleton Coast* (1944) about the rescue of the survivors of the *Dunedin Star* off the coast of Namibia. Mike Marsh, John H. Marsh's son referred to his friendship with Smuts in a conversation during June 2010. Lance van Sittert mentioned his friendship with General Smuts' private secretary. Lance van Sittert, "Antarctic History from Below: Joseph Daniels and the Annexation of Marion Island, 1923-1948" paper presented at the SCAR History Workshop, Stellenbosch, South Africa, 26-30 July 2011.

<sup>62</sup> "SA plants Flag in the Antarctic – Island Annexed by Frigate – Air Base to be established," *Cape Times*, (3 January 1948). "Mystery of S.A. Frigate Solved: Union Flag Planted on Island in Southern Indian Ocean," *Rand Daily Mail* (3 January 1948) and "Polar Air-Bases," *News Review* (15 January 1948).

<sup>63</sup> They mentioned this on authority of the *Cape Times*. High Commissioner, London to Secretary of External Affairs, 3 January 1948, SAB BTS 1/96/1 vol.1.

‘make topographical and geological surveys of the Antarctic continent’ (which was, of course, in summer at least 2300 kilometres of ocean away).<sup>64</sup>

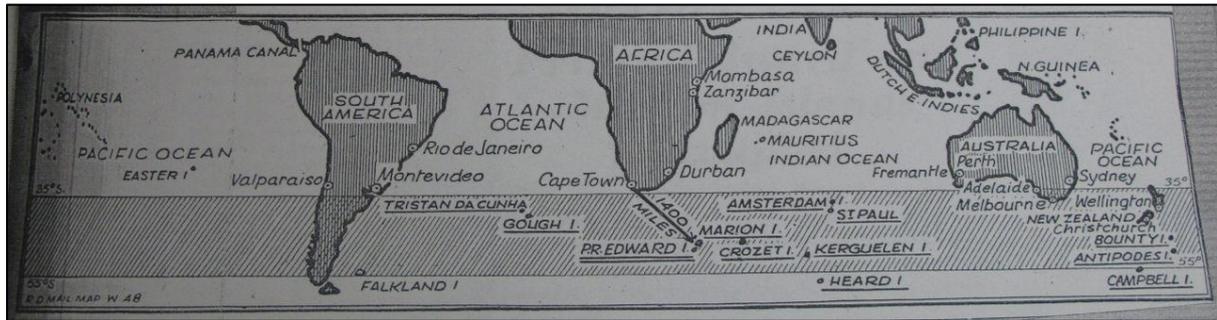


Figure 2.1: An illustration of the ‘chain of islands...encircling the Antarctic’ that accompanied an article on South Africa’s occupation of the Prince Edward Islands.

*Source: Rand Daily Mail (3 January 1948)*

The press reactions serve as a window into the public’s perception of Antarctica, the sub-Antarctic and South Africa’s role in the south as a Western ally. On the one hand, it was placed within the context of the British Empire. On the other hand, it was appropriated to a domestic debate. With regards to the global context of the occupation of the Prince Edward Islands, reference was made to the activities of the Soviet Whaling Fleet, as well as British-Argentine tensions over the Falklands. It was also noted in the press that the annexation may be part of an ‘Antarctic Race’. The idea that the annexation was linked to a broader imperial strategy was reinforced by references to a recent tour by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Bernard (Monty) Montgomery to Australia and South Africa, during which imperial security policies were also discussed.<sup>65</sup> Although there were no direct references to it, the Royal visit in 1947 would also have served to remind South Africans that they were part of an Imperial Commonwealth.<sup>66</sup>

The Union’s ‘new colonial possessions’, as the press dubbed them, were seen as reflective of the Union’s foreign policy as member of the Commonwealth, both within South Africa and in the metropole. The populist British broadsheet, the *Sunday Express*, welcomed the annexation, saying that it ‘is yet another welcome piece of evidence that South Africa in vital

<sup>64</sup> Anon., ‘SA plants flag in the Antarctic.’ Anon., ‘Why Union “Planting Flag” was Kept a 10-Day Secret: Prince Edward and Marion Islands Occupied,’ *Sunday Times* (4 January 1948) Anon., ‘Mystery of S.A. Frigate Solved.’

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. Montgomery’s full title was Bernard Montgomery, First Viscount Montgomery of Alamein.

<sup>66</sup> The tour, which coincided with negotiations on Indian independence, also stirred domestic debate on the place of South Africa in Empire. Hilary Sapire, ‘African Loyalty and its Discontents: The Royal Tour of South Africa, 1947,’ *The Historical Journal* 54, 1 (2011), 223.

matters of security, can work in efficient collaboration with another Dominion and with the British government.<sup>67</sup> The *Sunday Express* continued to revel in the apparent demonstration of loyalty to the empire. The editorial in the week following the annexation stated that '[a]lthough Smuts denied it, it was firmly believed that the South African planting of the flag on the Prince Edward Islands was part of an Empire strategy in which the Union is playing a major role.'<sup>68</sup>

Also drawing on the imperial ties, but taking a more analytical approach, the *Star* editorial shifted from its previous viewpoint that the 'South Sea Mystery' probably had little to do with global politics to one that emphasised the strategic motives. It pointed out that the Islands were 'a gift to the Union from Britain.'<sup>69</sup> It referred to the 'annihilation of space by the war' and that the 'time has passed when effective title to land in those regions could be established and maintained by staking a claim and colouring a map.'<sup>70</sup> In keeping with the idea of the annihilation of space, the editorial pointed out that, although these strategic considerations may never arise in practical form, the essential warrant for the Union's extending its dominion into the southern seas, 'resides in the fact that politically they no longer are a desolate no-man's land. They have become seas that wash the shores not of colonies, dominions or out-dated empires, but of new world powers'.<sup>71</sup> The importance of the new territory was associated with a post-war technocratic balance of power and the Union could not afford to be 'shut out from its own posts of observation'.<sup>72</sup>

Although most of the press followed a discourse of the Union's new 'empire', it was not necessarily the case throughout. One editorial said that to think of the Prince Edward Islands as 'colonies' was to take 'derisory liberties with language'.<sup>73</sup> Due to their 'uninhabitable' nature, they were not 'likely to rank high among the Union's assets for any intrinsic advantages of their own.'<sup>74</sup> Another headline read: 'South Africa takes over Island where nobody lives.'<sup>75</sup> The *Cape Times* noted with a hint of irony that those who did eventually

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<sup>67</sup> SPRI MS 1531/15 Anon., 'S. Africa's Newest Colony.'

<sup>68</sup> SPRI MS 1531/15: "Sending troops to Marion island: Frigate will Carry Men to Southern Bases this Week" (11 January 1948).

<sup>69</sup> SPRI MS 1531/15: Editorial, 'Two Islands and a Moral,' *Star* (January 1948).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> SAB BLO 11/287 PS 16/4 vol.1: Press Cutting. Anon., 'South Africa Overseas,' *South African* (10 January 1948).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> SAB BLO 11/287 PS 16/4 vol.1: Press Cutting. Anon., 'South Africa takes over Island where Nobody lives,' *Daily Mirror* (3 January 1948).

man the ‘outposts of South Africa’s “empire”’ would be vote-less nationals, with time and tide against them.<sup>76</sup>

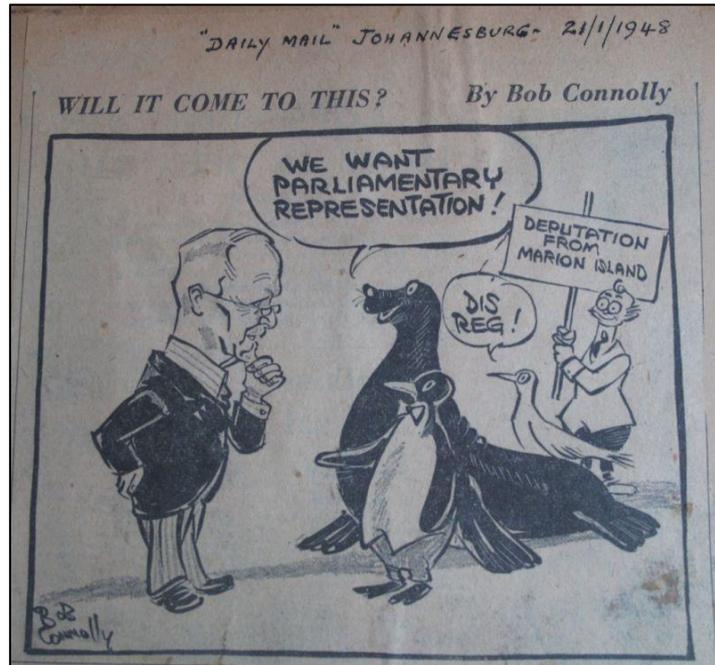


Figure 2.2: Bob Connolly, who was very critical of the National Party, drew this cartoon in the *Daily Mail* that commented on the parliamentary and racial politics in South Africa, using the material provided by South Africa’s occupation of the Prince Edward Islands. At the time, the Nationalist were fighting to remove the (already very limited) coloured franchise in the Cape Province.

Source: *Daily Mail* (21 January 1948)

Domestically, the annexation itself elicited much less comment than the Smuts’ government’s motivation for extending sovereignty over the islands. There was a perceptible difference in the opinions between the English and Afrikaans press. *Die Burger* acknowledged the possibility, ‘made explicit in the English press,’ that the annexation flowed from Montgomery’s visit and that it formed part of a wider empire strategy. It also pointed out that it could have been a purely practical move. *Die Burger*’s objection reflected the fluid domestic white politics of the time. *Die Burger* was the mouthpiece of the Purified National Party (‘Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party’), with D.F. Malan at its head. They were in opposition

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<sup>76</sup> ALP Marion Island Base Clipping Book. Anon., ‘Marion Island Men Will Miss Vote: Time and Tide the Key Factors,’ *Cape Times* (13 March 1948). Unsurprisingly the fact that the vast majority South Africans were not considered national citizen enough to vote in the 1948 election was not mentioned. Tax-paying South African citizens on South African territory in the case of Marion, or under South African jurisdiction in Antarctica have never been able to vote, yet strangely no serious attempt has been made to challenge this rather undemocratic state of affairs. Only once an exception was made, when a Marion voyage was delayed during the 1994 elections.

to Smuts and his United Party. In the run-up to the 1948 election and the political fight for the hearts and minds of whites had no clear favourite and the annexation provided interesting and creative material for the press arsenals. *Die Burger* editorial did not criticise annexation *per se* but rather the secrecy in which it was veiled, accusing the ‘British Field-Marshal’ of step-by-step implementing a new foreign policy without consulting the parliament. The fact that the Union might have acted in the interest of Britain was not endearing to them either.<sup>77</sup> Unsurprisingly, in the light of the suspicion of all things communist at both sides of the political divide, they added it would have been understandable to them if it was done in secrecy as to preclude a Soviet occupation.<sup>78</sup>

Given the nationalistic spirit of the times, domestically there was a noticeable lack of patriotic discourse around the Islands.<sup>79</sup> Instead of writing about the Islands themselves, there was a ubiquitous political humour attached to the Islands, with both sides of the (white) political spectrum using it in cartoons and speeches to heckle the other side. Being environmentally foreign to South Africa, yet filled with known and endearing creatures, it provided cartoonists with good material. Indeed, more political commentary was made in the cartoons than in editorials. *Die Burger*, for instance, carried a cartoon that showed Smuts looking for United Party supporters amongst the Marion Island penguins. *Die Vaderland*, another supporter of the Purified National Party, ran a similar cartoon showing Smuts reserving the islands for the ‘spent parliament’. In this cartoon, a pointed reference was made to the fact that the annexation may have had a British mandate as the flag held up by Jan Hofmeyer is the Union Jack and not the Union flag. On the other side of the political spectrum, Bob Connelly of the *Cape Times* and *Daily Mail* used the islands as an incongruous reference point to comment on the political issues of the day. He illustrated, for instance, how the penguins would have to listen to speeches about Apartheid or learn Afrikaans (these cartoons appear in chapter five, figures 5.1 and 5.3). There was at least one cartoon that alluded to another famous isolated Island, St. Helena, and the inhabitant for which that island became famous (figure 2.3). After the initial surprise at the Union’s actions and the speculation about the government’s motivation, there was little in the way of an enduring political discourse about the islands, especially after the first couple of weeks of

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<sup>77</sup> "Suidpool-Avontuur," *Die Burger* (5 January 1948); "Ons Suidpool-Empire," *Die Burger* (9 January 1948).

<sup>78</sup> Anon., ‘Ons Suidpool-Empire.’

<sup>79</sup> The expansion of Union territory to the Islands was also not linked to the expansion of Union territory to South-West Africa or the protectorates. This could be a reflection on the relatively transience of the Islands as a political issue or to the fact that generally, the inclusion of South-West Africa, in South Africa at least, was not seen in the same terms as annexation.

cartoon wordplay. It was possible that, because the islands' environment lacked a South African or even African comparison, they were rather useless in terms of political rhetoric, except where their desolate and strange nature was concerned.<sup>80</sup> More likely, the reason was that the press, the public and the politicians were pre-occupied with the upcoming election battles which promised to be acerbic and hard fought.

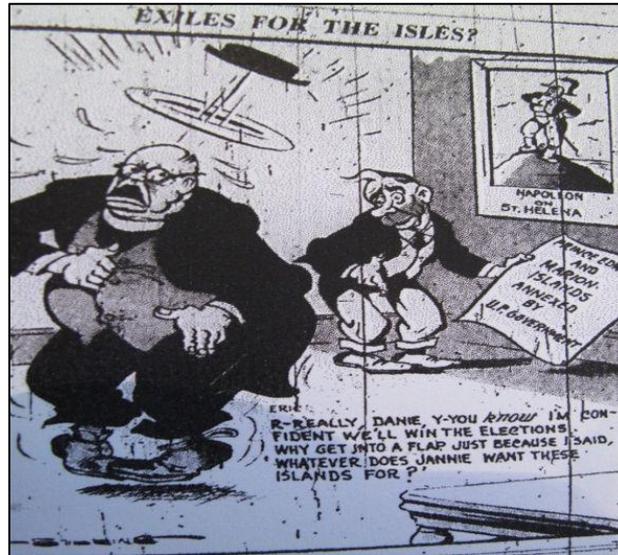


Figure 2.3: The cartoon shows Eric Louw, who would become South Africa's Minister of External Affairs in the Nationalist government, telling National Party president D.F. Malan that he will not suffer the same fate as Napoleon Bonaparte.

Source: *Cape Times* (5 January 1948)

## Internationalisation: Proposals and Expeditions, 1948 – 1952.

### *International Trusteeship of Antarctica*

Early in 1948 the United States informally approached countries with claims to Antarctica, with a view to discuss options for the internationalisation of the continent. One of the proposals included UN trusteeship, an option that the United Kingdom wanted to dissuade the US from pursuing, as it would open the door to the Soviet Union. They also opposed the idea because they wanted to protect the route around Cape Horn, an area adjoining the Antarctic Peninsula to which Chile, Argentina and Britain laid conflicting claims.<sup>81</sup> The United States

<sup>80</sup> More useful landscapes used in South African political speeches were the *veld* or the tropical jungle. In the United Kingdom, for instance, sub-Antarctic Islands could be named after their northern hemispheric counterparts – the south Shetlands, southern Thule, and South Sandwich Islands etc. Marion Islands' environment is comparable to the Hebrides for instance, hardly the kind of ecosystem ordinary South Africans would have any reference to. Even wetlands are scarce in Southern Africa

<sup>81</sup> A.H Hamilton to Secretary for External Affairs, 13 February 1948, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 5.

revised the proposal, with input from Britain. They suggested an eight-power condominium in which the seven countries with Antarctic claims and the United States would take ‘collective sovereignty’ over the continent.<sup>82</sup> The Chileans also put forward what became known as the Escudero proposal, which involved suspending sovereignty claims for a renewable period of five years in order to foster scientific cooperation.<sup>83</sup> None of these proposals came to fruition as they were, partly due to an underestimation of the ‘strengths of national feeling’ towards Antarctica and the resoluteness against Soviet involvement.<sup>84</sup> None of these proposals included South Africa.<sup>85</sup>

As a Commonwealth country South Africa was, however, included in the despatches from Britain that invited their comment. This included the United States and Escudero proposals for an international regime in Antarctica. South African officials believed that their involvement with the Prince Edward Islands, as well as South Africa’s geographical contiguity with Antarctica, warranted their inclusion in discussions around the continent.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, being excluded from the US proposal was taken as a diplomatic affront by South Africa.

The South Africans emphasised three points with regard to internationalisation proposals. First, that it should only apply to the continent and not the outlying islands. Secondly, that the continent probably ‘holds vast mineral treasures... which new scientific discoveries may make available in future.’<sup>87</sup> This meant that international arrangements with regards to exploiting what they considered to be *res nullius* should be made. Lastly, the South Africans

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<sup>82</sup> Howkins, “Frozen Empires,” 171.

<sup>83</sup> Beck, *International Politics of Antarctica*, 39. For more on the various proposals put forward in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War see Marie Jacobson, “Building the International Legal Framework for Antarctica,” Paul A. Berkman, Michael A. Lang, David W.H. Walton and Oran R. Young, eds, *Science Diplomacy: Antarctica, Science and the Governance of International Spaces* (Washington D.C: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2011), 1–17.

<sup>84</sup> Howkins, “Frozen Empires,” 171. Domestic politics, especially in Argentina, also precluded their participation. What was, however, put in place was a tripartite agreement between Britain, Argentina and Chile not to send naval vessels south of 60 degrees south other than those vessels busy with routine exercises.

<sup>85</sup> For detailed discussions of the politics behind these proposals, see Jason Kendall Moore, “Tethered to an Iceberg: United States Policy toward the Antarctic, 1939-49,” *Polar Record* 35 (1999) and Adrian Howkins, “Frozen Empires.” Seen from the viewpoint of the South Americans, Britain and the US, it would look like South African involvement was a non-issue until South Africa pointed out that they were excluded.

<sup>86</sup> A.H Hamilton to Secretary for External Affairs (13 February 1948), SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 5.

<sup>87</sup> Surveys during the American Operations Highjump and Windmill revealed that if Antarctica contained mineral deposits, they would not be exploitable in the near future. It was likely that the South African officials were not well-read in Antarctic research. Nevertheless, they were not alone in ascribing long-term strategic importance to the mineral potential.

expressed their worry that the increasing range of weapons might pose a threat, should Antarctica become a base from which they are launched.<sup>88</sup>

South Africa used the opportunity to state their position on claims to the continent: ‘the continent itself is unoccupied *res nullius* and as such can be made the subject of special *ad hoc* international arrangements which could be altered from time to time...British claims should be distinguished from this continental aspect.’<sup>89</sup> In further correspondence about the proposed ‘trusteeship’ of Antarctica, South Africa however maintained the United Kingdom position of not supporting the idea of placing Antarctica under trusteeship.<sup>90</sup> It would seem that their major concern has been being included in discussions, and at this stage they still readily agreed with United Kingdom viewpoints in an area they themselves knew little about. In a departure from the previous language of taking note but with uninterest, the Union added that it felt it should be included in any international discussions in Antarctica, as in ‘the field of long range and long term strategy, the control of Antarctica must always be a matter of primary concern...’, citing economic and strategic reasons and emphasising the role of South Africa in the Southern Hemisphere.<sup>91</sup>

Even so, the Union of South Africa was still lukewarm towards the Antarctic and had not demonstrated their interest in the Antarctic with the new currency of demonstration: research. Their eventual token role played in the Norwegian-British-Swedish Antarctic Expedition was illustrative of a haphazard attitude where just enough was done not be left out in the cold.

### ***The Norwegian-British-Swedish Antarctic Expedition: the ‘first international’ scientific expedition, 1950–1952***

It was with the internationalisation proposals in mind that the South African Minister of External Affairs urged the Department of Transport to re-examine the possibility of sending a South African scientist on an international expedition in the making, the Norwegian-British-Swedish expedition (NBSX).<sup>92</sup> This expedition has often been described as the first international expedition to Antarctica focussing primarily on science, specifically

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<sup>88</sup> Telegram from Minister of External Affairs, Cape Town to peers in London, Canberra, Ottawa, Wellington and Washington, 9 March 1948, SAB BTS 102/2 vol.5.

<sup>89</sup> Memorandum “Union and Antarctica,” March 1958, SAB BTS 102/2/7/1 Annexure Jacket F1.

<sup>90</sup> Top Secret note from the CRO to Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada, 21 July 1948, SAB BTS 102/2 vol.5.

<sup>91</sup> Telegram from Secretary for External Affairs, Pretoria to High Commissioner in London re Antarctic, 27 July 1948, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 5.

<sup>92</sup> B.J Jarvie for the Secretary of External Affairs to Secretary for Transport, 20 June 1949, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 6.

meteorology, glaciology and the effects of climate change.<sup>93</sup> Since the early planning stages, there had been suggestions in South Africa that this expedition should be used as a means to give a South African scientist Antarctic exposure, but for the time being it was felt that the CSIR could not support it and ‘that moneys for research could be better employed in extending its own activities and those of the Universities.’<sup>94</sup>

J.M Wordie, chairman of the Polar Committee and advocate of greater Commonwealth participation in Antarctica, told South African officials in 1947 that he personally knew of two South Africans who would like to join the expedition and that it would be an unusual opportunity for South Africa to participate in Antarctic research. One of them was Joe King, who also became involved with Marion later that year.<sup>95</sup> Wordie also pointed out that the area that the NBSX proposed to visit was in the sector directly south of South Africa and as such could hold geological and meteorological significance for the country.<sup>96</sup> Schonland, when consulted on this, reiterated his earlier position, stating that his council instructed him that ‘there is not a good case for the expenditure of money by South Africa on Antarctic Research.’<sup>97</sup> If political factors made it worthwhile, Schonland would consult the South African Antarctic Research Committee.<sup>98</sup> The fact that Antarctic matters were dealt with in an *ad hoc* manner, with no one having the expertise or being assigned clear authority to make decisions also led to inaction.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> J. Giaver, *The White Desert: The Official Account of the Norwegian-British-Swedish Antarctic Expedition*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969). Specifically, based on the receding glaciers of the Arctic, they wanted to investigate if the glaciers in Antarctica were also receding and if so, if it was doing so in synchronisation with the glaciers of the Arctic. It was first proposed in 1943, but due to financial and strategic concerns only departed six years later. For more on the political and strategic issues around the NSBX, including the politics and strategies related to science, see Peder Roberts, *The European Antarctic: science and strategy in Scandinavia and the British Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>94</sup> Schonland to Hofmeyr, 9 October 1946, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 3.

<sup>95</sup> At the time he was head of the Synoptic and Forecasting Branch of the Union Weather Bureau. He went on to play an important role in South Africa’s international relations with the World Meteorological Organization.

<sup>96</sup> The South African official dealing with the correspondence was cognisant of its being Norwegian territory, even though not officially recognised by South Africa. He recommended that the Secretary of External Affairs should have a word with the Norwegian minister in Pretoria. Sole to Secretary for External Affairs, 7 July 1947, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 3.

<sup>97</sup> Sole to High Commission in United Kingdom, 28 August 1947 and Lester King to Assistant Secretary for the Geological Association of South Africa, 18 September 1947, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 3.

<sup>98</sup> Schonland to the Secretary for External Affairs, “U.K-Norwegian Expedition to the Antarctic,” 8 August 1947, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 3.

<sup>99</sup> Sole to High Commission in United Kingdom, 28 August 1947 and Lester King to Assistant Secretary for the Geological Association of South Africa, 18 September 1947, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 3.

The NBSX was postponed, but when it was on the cards again, the political landscape and the view on the importance of polar science had changed.<sup>100</sup> After the occupation of the Prince Edward Islands, the Department of External Affairs decided that it ought to make a nominal contribution to the Scott Polar Research Institute as a means to access information, both practical and political.<sup>101</sup> Secondly, South Africa's exclusion from the 1948 United States proposal piqued political interest in Antarctica. South Africa's attitude towards international relations, including those relating to Antarctica, also changed with the National Party (NP) victory in the 1948 elections. They emphasised South Africa's position as an autonomous nation and were more likely to draw on national prestige when considering international questions. Furthermore, the NP harboured strong feelings of anti-communism. To the NP, Soviet activities on the Antarctic would have raised suspicions of real threats to the country's security. Thus, when asked again if they wished to include a meteorologist in the NBSX, officials hurriedly organised King's passage.<sup>102</sup>

The South African scientific community in Cape Town in particular made use of the opportunity to network with their colleagues when the *Norsel* docked in the Mother City. Similarly, there was a display of generous hospitality to an important polar expedition, including hosting telegraphic communications, so that telegraphs could be relayed through Cape Town at minimum cost.<sup>103</sup> These actions however, remained mere gestures made by individuals with some personal interest in polar science and there was little to no cabinet level interest. It was only with the approval of South Africa's participation in the International Geophysical Year (IGY) that South Africans became involved in Antarctic science on any international platform.

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<sup>100</sup> Roberts, "Frozen Field of Dreams," especially chapter 6.

<sup>101</sup> This was agreed upon by all the departments consulted, except Commerce and Industries, who could see no immediate value in investing in the Southern Polar Regions. A.H Hamilton to Secretary for External Affairs, 19 January 1948, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 3.

<sup>102</sup> There was not even time for King to acquire the right gear and urgent despatches were sent with regards to payment for gear already on the vessel for his use. Although the importance of South African activity was noted, even the littlest expense garnered vast amounts of correspondence. It was not seen as so important yet that it was allocated a budget. High Commissioner to Secretary for External Affairs, 2 December 1949, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 6.

<sup>103</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Minutes of a meeting of the Polar Committee, 1 June 1951, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 7. Other displays of hospitality included an evening event organised by the S2A3 and gifts of wine and other drinks from the South African Government and an exceptionally friendly welcome at the harbour, 'even from custom officials'. Giaever, *The White Desert*, 40-42.

### ***Preparations for the International Geophysical Year 1950–1955***

As was mentioned in the Introduction, histories of science in South Africa tended to focus more on the utilitarian sciences and little has been written about the impact of so-called ‘big science’ in South Africa. The IGY was a good example of ‘big science’ in action. Yet, South Africans’ role in the IGY and the background to their participation had not received any sustained attention in the past. In the *History of Scientific Endeavour in South Africa*, it is mentioned in the passing.<sup>104</sup> South Africa’s participation in the IGY, then the world’s largest collaborative scientific effort yet, became a key turning point as it eventually contributed to South Africa being invited to join the Antarctic club.

The IGY had precedents in two international polar years (IPY).<sup>105</sup> South Africa took part in the low-key second IPY from August 1932 to September 1933.<sup>106</sup> The story told about the IGY was that, at a dinner party of top American and British scientists, Lloyd Berkner first voiced the idea that a new polar year ought to be held, especially with the new tools of radar, rockets and computers at the scientists’ disposal.<sup>107</sup> Unlike the GSSA scientists who proposed an IPY in 1946, this particular group of scientists had the international status and political clout to drive the project.<sup>108</sup> Post-war economies were also starting to recover, and funding would have been more easily available than in 1946.

Political hurdles to the IGY were temporarily moved to the outside lane by a ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ to call a ceasefire on escalating sovereignty disputes and to encourage the free exchange of scientists between bases.<sup>109</sup> The scope of the IGY soon outgrew Antarctica and became, in the words of the *Cape Times*, ‘the most extensive examination of the earth and its

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<sup>104</sup> The chapter on the History of Geomagnetic, Ionospheric and Cosmic-Ray Research in South Africa makes most mention of it. Two of its authors, A.M van Wijk and P.H. Stoker, were directly involved in the IGY. A.M van Wijk, R.W Vice and P.H Stoker, “The History of Geomagnetic, Ionospheric and Cosmic-Ray Research in South Africa,” A.G Brown, ed, *A History of Scientific Endeavour in South Africa* (Cape Town: The Rustica Press for the Royal Society of South Africa, 1977), 357-371.

<sup>105</sup> For more on the first IPY, see Aant Elzinga, “Through the lens of the polar years: changing characteristics of polar research in historical perspective,” *Polar Record* 45, 235 (2009), 313-336 and Cornelia Lüdecke, “The first International Polar Year. A big experiment with small science equipment,” *Proceedings of the International Commission of Meteorology* 1, 1 (2004), 55–64.

<sup>106</sup> J.D. Viall, “South Africa: The Road to the Antarctic Treaty,” *South African Journal of Antarctic Research*, 21, 2 (1991), 125.

<sup>107</sup> Elzinga, “Through the lens of the polar years,” 323. Lloyd Berkner was an American physicist and engineer. The party was held at James van Allen’s house (he was a space scientist), in honour of Sydney Chapman, a British-born space and mathematical physicist. They were all also involved with the second International Polar Year. Chapman was president of the CSAGI and Berkner vice-president.

<sup>108</sup> It has not been possible to ascertain if this group of scientists were aware of the 1946 proposal by the Geological Society of South Africa as such, but they were certainly not strangers to similar proposals.

<sup>109</sup> Peter Beck, *The International Politics of Antarctica* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), 47. For a concise overview of this “deepening maelstrom” that preceded the IGY, see Pyne, *The Ice*, 341–347.

surroundings ever carried out by man,' a '£35,000,000 Survey of the Universe.'<sup>110</sup> It was a lively manifestation of science under the patronage of government, the 'big science' of the Cold War Era, rooted in the military-industrial complex that characterised major scientific research endeavours. In 1952, the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) appointed the Special Committee for the Geophysical Year (GSAGI).<sup>111</sup> The South African IGY programme was organised by the CSIR, as it was South Africa's representative at ICSU. Chaired by Schumann, the South African IGY Committee appointed members from all major scientific centres in South Africa, including the Bernard Price Institute of Geophysics, the Union Observatory, the Telecom Research Laboratory of the CSIR and the Magnetic Observatory at Hermanus.<sup>112</sup> Research funds were channelled through the CSIR.

By the 1950s, it became clear that science would be increasingly run as a government business and this was the pattern in South Africa as well.<sup>113</sup> The CSIR resorted under the Department of Trade and Commerce, and the *Industrial* Research that was part of its name and remit was as important, if not more important, than the *Scientific* part. This was also reflected in mundane details, for instance a recommendation that, where possible, some of the apparatus necessary for the cosmic ray programme must be built by masters students to save on costs.<sup>114</sup> This did not necessarily prevent the often cash-strapped scientists to use the extra funds made available through the IGY to duplicate some work for the sake of easier observation.<sup>115</sup>

South Africa's IGY programme did not only concentrate on Antarctic meteorology. South Africa was, for instance, commissioned to do oceanographic and ionosphere research closer

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<sup>110</sup> "Earth's Secrets to be Probed: £ 35,000,000 Survey of the Universe," *Cape Times* (10 January 1955).

<sup>111</sup> It was known by its French name, the Comité Speciale de l'Année Geophysique Internationale (GSAGI).

<sup>112</sup> The representatives were: Dr. P.G Gane of the Bernard Price Institute, Dr. W.H van den Bos of the Union of South Africa Observatory; Mr P.J Hewitt of the Telecommunications Research Laboratory of the CSIR and Dr A.M van Wijk of the Hermanus Magnetic Observatory; Dr P.H Stoker and Prof P.J.G de Vos, Universities of Potchefstroom and Stellenbosch respectively for nuclear physics and cosmic ray research. D.G. Kingwill, Chief Liaison Officer, CSIR to Prof P.J.G de Vos, Department of Physics, Stellenbosch University, 21 June 1954, ALP, Private Collection, P.H. Stoker.

<sup>113</sup> G.E Fogg, *A History of Antarctic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 48.

<sup>114</sup> D.G. Kingwill, Chief Liaison Officer, CSIR to Prof P.J.G de Vos, Department of Physics, Stellenbosch University, 21 June 1954, ALP Private Collection, P.H. Stoker.

<sup>115</sup> 'Die WNNR gee mos die geld!' Dr. AM van Wijk to Dr. P.H Stoker, 2 June 1955, ALP Private Collection, P.H. Stoker. The CSIR seemed keen to provide the scientists with sufficient support for research that required expensive apparatus. Earlier that year, extra funds of £320, which fell short and £570, which was sufficient was allocated towards buying cosmic ray apparatus for the IGY. Dr. Pieter de Vos to Dr. P.H Stoker 17 February 1956, ALP Private Collection, P.H. Stoker.

to the African coast.<sup>116</sup> The only South African programme that proposed Antarctic specific research was the Weather Bureau.<sup>117</sup> The prolific Schumann often used the meetings to lobby for a belt of meteorological stations on and around Antarctica. There was one link in this belt that Schumann especially coveted, Bouvet Island.

### ***An IGY dream destination: Bouvet Island, 1955***

For Schumann, Bouvet Island was the prize south Atlantic location, especially in forecasting South African weather. Schumann, a technocrat with a talent for making connections with influential people, corresponded with his Norwegian counterpart, Harald Svedrup about the possibility of setting up a station on the island.<sup>118</sup> Bouvet's weather station, in conjunction with meteorological data gathered from Marion Island and other sub-Antarctic islands, was to form part of the Southern Hemisphere Atmospheric Project, a mapping of the Southern Hemisphere weather systems initiated by the South African Weather Bureau in 1951.<sup>119</sup> By 1955 Schumann convinced the authorities to send a reconnaissance expedition to Bouvet in anticipation of the IGY.

Bouvet Island was the quintessential dystopian deserted island. The following description of the isolation of the Bouvet by Rupert Gould is instructive: 'Around Bouvet Island, it is possible to draw a circle of one thousand miles radius (having an area of 3,146,000 square miles, or very nearly that of Europe) which contains no other land whatever.'<sup>120</sup> It is little wonder then, that the newspapers in South Africa described how the icebergs may 'put the screw on' the *Transvaal* as it 'brave[d] Antarctic rigours' towards the 'lonely' and 'desolate' Island with its 'precipitous, forbidding shores.'<sup>121</sup> The outlook on Bouvet may have been

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<sup>116</sup> "International Geophysical Year. National Committee for the Union of South Africa. Proposed Programme," undated, ALP Private Collection, P.H. Stoker. They were to do oceanographic research along sections crossing the Angola and Mozambique sea currents. The South African Radio Observation programme sought to determine the distribution of radio noise over the southern African sub-continent.

<sup>117</sup> "International Geophysical Year. National Committee for the Union of South Africa. Proposed Programme," undated, ALP Private Collection, P.H. Stoker.

<sup>118</sup> Peder Roberts and Lize-Marié van der Watt, 'Bouvet Island and the Limits of Cold War Science,' *Exploring Ice and Snow in the Cold War* (Rachel Carson Centre, forthcoming).

<sup>119</sup> J.J. Taljaard, "Suid-Afrika se Aandeel in Weerkundige Waarneming en Navorsing in die Antarktiese Gebied," *Tegnikon* (1966), 98.

<sup>120</sup> Rupert Gould, "The Auroras, and other Doubtful Islands," *Oddities: A Book of Unexplained Facts* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1944), 136. From M Dash, "An abandoned lifeboat at world's end," *A Blast from the Past* (13 February 2011).

<http://allkindsofhistory.wordpress.com/2011/02/13/an-abandoned-lifeboat-at-worlds-end/> (Accessed 6 April 2011).

<sup>121</sup> "S.A. Gaan Verlate Eiland Besoek: Geleerdes kan Baat by Weer-Pos op Bouvet," *Die Burger* (4 January 1955); "Eerste Besoek in 20 Jaar: Ysberge Kan S.A. Skip Opkeil op Pad na Eensame Eiland," *Die Burger* (20 January 1955); "Geselskap sal Kyk Hoe Hard Bouvet se Rotse is," *Die Burger* (25 January 1955); "Frigate Sails To-day to Brave Antarctic Rigours," *Cape Times* (25 January 1925).

bleak, but the successful establishment of a weather station there would arguably have been a prestigious scientific and logistic feat.

It was again the SAS *Transvaal* that made a few landings to look for a suitable spot where a station could be erected.<sup>122</sup> In keeping with the pioneering spirit, it was touted as the first known visit to Bouvet since that of the *Norvegia* in 1930.<sup>123</sup> On a simple, logistic level, the interrelation between science, technology, the environment and the strategic roles of such an island station were evident in the criteria according to which these stations were assessed. The first possible site, on a snow slope, assured, amongst other things, water supply and provided a lee for huts and ships. Its disadvantages were mostly logistic: helicopters were needed and heavy snow deposits would ‘lessen chances of survival.’<sup>124</sup> The scientific disadvantage pertained to its meteorological purpose: the altitude and visibility made the location less suitable for a station. A site on the mainland portion, although better in terms of weather observation, was considered to be more expensive and even less pleasant, but it would have been useful to the Navy and the Air Force in cases of emergency. A third site was discounted even before a landing was effected, due to the ‘menacing ice’ and ice face, where nothing more happened than ‘a shower of snow’ when shells were fired into them to test their firmness. Minor avalanches, however, occurred frequently and naturally.<sup>125</sup> Even the seals, that were deemed sluggish but tame on Marion Island, were described as ‘objecting to our intrusion’ and ‘unfriendly, to say the least.’<sup>126</sup> Moreover, Bouvet’s euphemistically called ‘unfavourable weather’ and inaccessibility was thought to make it too risky and expensive for a meteorological station at that point in time. They were, however, positive that it might be possible with better technology, resources and on condition of a winter reconnaissance.<sup>127</sup> In the face of this challenging environment, it was recommended that if a weather station was established, it would call for the ‘discipline of a military service’, of men thought to be

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<sup>122</sup> Captained by Paul Dryden-Hammond, who also took the first relief team to Marion.

<sup>123</sup> “Eerste Besoek in 20 Jaar,” *Die Burger*; “Most Isolated Spot in the World,” *Washington Star* (18 August 1958) and “Expedition to a Southern Isle,” *The Times* (1 March 1955) from ALP Private Collection, Wilhelm Verwoerd. Bouvet was, however, visited in 1939 by the *Discovery II* and a landing made.

<sup>124</sup> Presumably, survival of the station was meant, although human changes of survival on a slope likely to experience frequent avalanches were probably not great.

<sup>125</sup> L.Q Hayward, “South African Weather Bureau’s Reconnaissance of Bouvet Island,” undated, SAB DWB 20M11-6-1-7.

<sup>126</sup> A.B Crawford, *Tristan da Cunha and the Roaring Forties* (Edinburgh & London: Charles Skilton and Cape Town: David Philip, 1982), 160 and L.Q Hayward, “South African Weather Bureau’s Reconnaissance of Bouvet Island,” undated, SAB DWB 20M11-6-1-7.

<sup>127</sup> Minutes of a Meeting to Discuss Reports on Bouvet Island Reconnaissance and to Plan Future Action, 25 February 1955, and L.Q Hayward, “South African Weather Bureau’s Reconnaissance of Bouvet Island,” undated, SAB DWB 20M11-6-1-7; Taljaard, “Suid-Afrika se Aandeel in Weerkundige Waarneming en Navorsing,” 96; Crawford *Tristan da Cunha*, 162.

physically and mentally capable of dealing with the deprivations posed by the nature of Bouvet.<sup>128</sup>

Although Schumann might well have had a predominantly scientific interest in Bouvet, the South African Chief of General Staff highlighted the potential strategic importance: ‘As that area control the southern links between the great oceans and the southern point of South Africa will play an utterly important role in the maritime connections between east and west in times of conflict’ it was an area of great strategic importance for ‘South Africa and her allies.’<sup>129</sup> This strategic importance was certainly reflected in South Africa’s dismay when the CSAGI put out a resolution that either Norway or South Africa or Russia or any combination of the above should try to establish a weather station on Bouvet during the duration of the IGY. As far as the Weather Bureau was concerned, however, they were content with the ‘unwanted element’ of the USSR as long as they shared the data.<sup>130</sup>

Bouvet Island was inimical, uninhabited and remote, yet perceived as intimately linked to a global pattern of weather and strategy. For Schumann and his two successors, M.P van Rooy and S.A Engelbrecht, Bouvet Island remained the missing piece that spoiled the whole synoptic puzzle. It was only during the latter’s tenure when South Africa had a dedicated polar vessel modified to carry helicopters, that a successful reconnaissance was made. By the third meeting of the IGY organising committee, the CSAGI, in Paris, 1955, the more amicable Gough Island was included in the South African programme.<sup>131</sup> In 1955, however, ‘Norway’s outpost was...left to the birds, sea-elephants and seals.’<sup>132</sup>

### ***The IGY station within South Africa’s reach: Gough Island 1954–1956***

Bouvet Island was inaccessible and the meteorological station on Marion was not producing directly useful data (as was expected). It was also well-known in meteorological circles that

<sup>128</sup> Minutes of a Meeting to Discuss Reports on Bouvet Island Reconnaissance and to Plan Future Action, 25 February 1955, SAB DWB 20M11-6-1-7. It was also pointed out that, even if they had a helicopter, it would have been impossible to fly in winds exceeding 25 knots, not an uncommon occurrence at Bouvet Island.

<sup>129</sup> Memorandum, “Bouvet Eiland en Russiese Deelneming in Antarktika aan die Aktiwiteite van die Internasionale Geofisiese Jaar,” 2 February 1956, SAB BTS 102/2/15.

<sup>130</sup> W.L Hofmeyer, Union delegate to 3<sup>rd</sup> CSAGI conference in Paris and Head: Research at the South African Weather Bureau to T.E.W Schumann, chairman of South Africa’s IGY Organising Committee, 6 August 1956, SAB DWB 20M11-6-1-7. In fact, the Russians were willing to take care of the transport and send two observers if the Union and/or Norway could supply the materials and instruments. Eventually, the only activity on Bouvet during the IGY was a non-IGY related visit by the US Navy vessel *Westwind* in 1957. Note by representative, “Die Russiese verteenwoordiger het hom ongeveer as volg oor Bouvet uitgelaat – volgens aantekeninge gemaak tydens die toespraak,” August 1956, SAB DWB 20M11-6-1-7. Also see Crawford, *Tristan da Cunha*, 162.

<sup>131</sup> It was known by its French acronym: Comité Spéciale de l’Année Geophysique Internationale.

<sup>132</sup> Taljaard, “Suid-Afrika se Aandeel in Weerkundige Waarneming en Navorsing.”

Gough Island, which is at the very edge of the sub-Antarctic, would be a more sensible location than Marion for a weather station, especially in terms of forecasting.<sup>133</sup> Prevailing south-westerly frontal systems passed Gough Island, situated about 2700 kilometres southwest of Cape Town, on its way to its South African landfall.<sup>134</sup> Globally, very little meteorological data was available from the south Atlantic – an important part of the shipping route between South America and Europe, and between South America and southern Africa. Synoptic charts were more accurate if more data from more locations could be gathered.<sup>135</sup> Tristan da Cunha, which is about 395 kilometres north-northwest from Gough, was a more convenient setting for a meteorological station as it was inhabited and had a natural harbour. However, the volcano that dominated the landscape caused too much local disturbance for accurate readings of larger frontal systems.<sup>136</sup> Schumann, while favouring Bouvet, drew attention to the fact that a weather station on Gough Island will not just have the local benefit of better forecasting. It would also add to scientific prestige. In reference to a recent conference of the World Meteorological Organisation and the upcoming IGY, Schumann was one of the first South Africans to point out the contribution South Africa can make to progress in world science by its involvement with meteorological stations in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic.<sup>137</sup>

Discussions around the establishment of a meteorological station were reintroduced when Soviet inscriptions were found on a rock on the coast of Gough and one of the Soviet whaling vessels made a suspiciously slow journey back to Cape Town from its whaling fields. On the one hand, the presence of the Soviets played in the Union's favour in that it lent urgency to an administrative process that could have taken years. Gough Island was a British possession and although that was not a major obstacle, it would have involved extra paper work and diplomacy. Being a Commonwealth country, however, officials thought that South Africa's 'permanent occupation' by means of a weather station could deter any counterclaims of

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<sup>133</sup> A.F Spilhaus, American meteorologist who wrote a report on the South African meteorological services, was the 'expert' quoted in this. Memoranda on meteorological stations and other scientific infrastructure during this era more often than not relied on the expertise of overseas scientists – and the fact that they came from overseas mostly were emphasised.

<sup>134</sup> Martin Holdgate, *Mountains in the Sea: The Story of the Gough Island Expedition* (London: The Travel Book Club, 1958), 4.

<sup>135</sup> For a contemporary interpretation of this, see L.Q Hayward, "Weather Reports from Gough Island," *Newsletter of the Weather Bureau*, 61 (30 April 1954), 5–6.

<sup>136</sup> C.C.L Bertram, Scott Polar Research Institute to T.E.W Schumann, 19 January 1955, SAB DWB 122 M12/10/3/1.

<sup>137</sup> T.E.W. Schumann, Director of the Weather Bureau to the Secretary for Transport, 18 November 1954, SAB BTS 102/2 vol. 6.

sovereignty that might emanate from the USSR. Such a claim to Gough Island, it was feared, could lead to the USSR gaining a foothold on the South Pole region.<sup>138</sup> On the other hand, the potential Soviet presence reminded the South African officials that Gough Island was in a similar strategic position with a straight line to the South African coast than the Prince Edward Islands.<sup>139</sup>

The officials who suggested that South Africa should take initiative in establishing a meteorological station on Gough Island encountered a by now well-known attitude from South African officials – reluctance and indecisiveness. Firstly, there was a lack of coordination between the different departments, and again documents were often vague on who the responsible party was to be. Secondly, although not occupied, Gough was much more officially British, which added an extra dimension to another country doing the occupation. Lastly, it would seem as if not enough staff and expertise were available.

There might also be a hint of truth in a remark by John B. Heany on the South Africans' apparent reluctance to partake in major expeditions. Heany was the organiser of the British expedition that eased the eventual establishment of the Gough Island weather station. In a private letter he wrote that they would give Johannes J. van der Merwe, the meteorological assistant they wanted to take along on the trip, 'basic pay plus the £400 p.a. that has to be offered to South Africans as a bribe to go to outlandish places.'<sup>140</sup>

The Gough Island Scientific Survey was conceptualised by some Cambridge men who enlisted Crawford as their South African agent after he volunteered for the job. Gough was to Crawford what Bouvet was to Schumann.<sup>141</sup> As it was a private British expedition, Schumann was glad to assist by means of seconding personnel and lending equipment whilst still being able to channel the Bureau's resources towards the reconnaissance of Bouvet Island.<sup>142</sup> The Gough Survey was also supported by the Argus newspaper group in South Africa.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Brig. P.de Waal, Naval and Marine Chief of Staff to Chief of General Staff, 19 June 1952 and D. Spies, Interim Secretary of External Affairs to Secretary of Transport, 20 August 1954, SAB BTS 102/2/6 vol.1.

<sup>139</sup> Memorandum on Gough Island, 20 September 1954, SAB BTS 102/2/6 vol. 1.

<sup>140</sup> Letter from John Heany to Robert Chambers, 5 March 1955, SPRI MS 1507/2/42/D vol. 1. Although there might have been some truth in Heany's generalisation about (white) South Africans' lack of enthusiasm towards 'outlandish places' the comment was probably unfair where Van der Merwe was concerned, he already spent a year on Marion Island in agreed to go on the expedition even if the Union Treasury did not approve the overhead allowance, J.J van der Merwe to John Heany, 23 March 1953, SPRI MS 1507/2/42/D vol. 1.

<sup>141</sup> Crawford to King, 19 March 1948, SPRI MS1531/14.

<sup>142</sup> Heany to High Commissioner, South Africa House, 30 March 1955, SAB BTS 102/2/6 vol.1.

<sup>143</sup> Holdgate *Mountains in the Sea*, 7.

Support for the Survey largely depended in the individual efforts of Crawford and Schumann, who drew on their professional and personal contacts. There was little evidence of a coordinated effort from the South African government to establish a presence, scientific or strategic, on Gough Island. When the Survey neared its end, it became clear from the meteorological reports that Gough Island was indeed useful in terms of forecasting. Moreover, with a second trip to Bouvet reconnaissance indefinitely postponed and the IGY just a year away, the opportunity existed for the South African Weather Bureau to make use of the infrastructure put in place by the Survey and use Gough Island as an IGY weather station.<sup>144</sup> In the same year the station on Gough Island was established, the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition set off for the Antarctic. It was a United Kingdom incentive that would see the first South African reach the South Pole.

## Conclusion

This chapter started with a short background to the Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic in the immediate post-War and Cold War context. This redrawn picture of the world and its military-strategic implications, made it politically expedient for South Africa to take an active interest first in the Antarctic fringe and finally in the continent itself. The occupation of the Prince Edward Islands, occurring so soon after the War, was mainly a defence and international relations decision. The ruse of meteorology failed to convince the press and the public. The act of extending Union territory to the south elicited less comment than the reasons behind it, which, was quickly drawn into domestic white politics as a quirky heckling point. Even as a strategic acquisition the Islands themselves were less important than what they represented. They were not actively staffed with military personnel unless they were incidentally seconded as radio-operators or medical orderlies. Rather, the occupation of the Islands fitted into a broader but not necessarily clearly articulated strategy of positioning the Union as a 'Western' nation, also geopolitically. The lack of nationalistic rhetoric around the Island's occupation should also not be surprising, given its timing just before a hotly contested election. Smuts, who was heavily criticised by his opposition for being an agent of the British Empire (imperialism being an anathema to the Nationalists), would hardly have used the annexation of territory to boost his own campaign.

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<sup>144</sup> Holdgate, *Mountains in the Sea*, 194. D.D. Forsyth to Union High Commissioner, 21 December 1955, SAB BTS 102/2/6 vol. 1; "Union Weather Station for Gough Island," *Cape Argus* (9 February 1956).

Nevertheless, the occupation of the Prince Edward Islands did have the effect of making South Africa more aware of the world south of Cape Town. When the United States failed to include South Africa among the other “western” states they approached in 1948 about the prospect of the internationalisation of Antarctica, South Africa was vexed that they were not deemed an important enough power in the southern hemisphere. They were, however, still not ready to make more than a token investment to the first expedition that took an international character, the NBSX. Meanwhile, individual scientist-technocrats like Schumann and Crawford sought to use the changing political outlines to conquer Bouvet and Gough.

## Chapter 3

# Between East and West: locating the Antarctic in a new world order, c.1955 – c.1960

### Introduction

‘Typical of the fact that there is now “one world”, is the interest currently taken by humanity in the South Pole Regions,’ remarked an editorial in *Die Transvaler*.<sup>1</sup> This chapter continues to explore South Africa’s involvement in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic in the context of the changing spatial frameworks of empire, the nation state and repositioning of global powers in the Cold War. Four key events are discussed in this chapter. First there is the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1956/1957 that was intended to display Commonwealth solidarity. This chapter probes the reasons behind South Africa’s token participation as well as how South Africa sought to imbue it with the trappings of nationalism. Secondly, this chapter looks at continuing and intensifying efforts to come to an international agreement about Antarctica, including an anti-colonial effort by India to put Antarctica on the UN agenda in 1956. The chapter discusses the effects the possibility that Antarctica might be put under UN trusteeship had on South Africa’s attitude towards activity in the region. Finally, the chapter analyses the role of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) (1957/58) in the ‘colonisation’ of Antarctica by science leading to an invitation being extended to South Africa to join multilateral talks towards a regime for Antarctica. South Africa was anxious about legitimising its place at the discussion table and started looking toward making its own presence felt on the Antarctic continent. Lastly, the chapter interrogates how the Antarctic Treaty, which was signed in 1959, extended further than the cold continent.

### South Pole Safari: The Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition

#### *Proposals for Commonwealth Expedition and Commonwealth reluctance*

Proposals for a trans-Antarctic journey followed soon after the successful Norwegian-British-Swedish Expedition (NBSX). From its inception, what became known as the British Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition (CTAE) consciously drew on a romantic notion of Antarctic exploration. It would pay homage to the dream of British polar hero, Ernest

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<sup>1</sup> Editorial, “Poolstreke kry meer aandag,” *Die Transvaler* (16 October 1959).

Shackleton.<sup>2</sup> It was felt that, in an environment where Antarctic exploration took on a clinical military aspect, (especially as pursued by the United States and the Argentineans), a crossing of Antarctica was one ‘of the few big things that remained to be done in the sphere of exploration.’<sup>3</sup>

Scientific justifications for such an expedition were many in view of the dearth of geographical data available.<sup>4</sup> An official statement of the Management Committee for the CTAE read: ‘The first aim of the expedition is to accomplish a great journey, important scientific objectives are combined with this and will include topographical and geological survey...’<sup>5</sup> In particular, they sought to illuminate conflicting theories on whether Antarctica was one continent or two as well as whether or not the Andean mountain chain re-emerged on the Peninsula. The latter was a geological problem with political ramifications for the United Kingdom, as it would have lend credence to South American arguments of geographical contiguity, to be used as a basis for claims of sovereignty.<sup>6</sup> They also wished to study the influence of the ice-sheet on Southern Ocean biology, gain a fuller understanding of the meteorological conditions, as well as to provide training for service personnel in polar conditions.<sup>7</sup>

Although the organising committee placed emphasis on the scientific aspects, exploring a wide swath of continent was also useful in extenuating territorial claims in the Antarctic.<sup>8</sup> The area chosen included British bases in Coatsland and importantly also the Ross Dependency. The United States, having actively and even aggressively explored the Ross sea area, had not put forward a territorial claim nor did it recognise the claims of other countries. It was also unclear whether or not they were considering doing so – in which case they would have had a good record of ‘effective occupation’, a much better one than New Zealand. Even more worrisome to the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey (FIDS), was that Argentina

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<sup>2</sup> Klaus Dodds, *Pink Ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 59.

<sup>3</sup> Proposals for a Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1951–1953), Vivian Fuchs, Extract from the Minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Polar Committee, 15 September 1953, TNA CO 1024/60.

<sup>4</sup> Dodds, *Pink Ice*, 60–61.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Dodds, *Pink Ice*, 61.

<sup>6</sup> South American jurists favoured the theory that the Andean chain continued into the Antarctic, as this would serve as proof of geographical contiguity.

<sup>7</sup> Proposals for a Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition (1951–1953), Vivian Fuchs, Extract from the Minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Polar Committee, 15 September 1953, TNA CO 1024/60.

<sup>8</sup> This was not, however, universally accepted. The United Kingdom Foreign Office representative, for instance, was described by the SA representative to have been ‘rather severe in discrediting the suggestion.’ A.M Hamilton, South Africa House to Secretary for External Affairs, 8 October 1953, SAB BTS 102/2/4 vol. 1.

was busy outclassing the United Kingdom – most noticeably by adding an ice-breaker to its fleet, a vessel the British lacked. The overriding characteristic of the endeavour however, was the attempts to mount a display of the strength of the ties between the (white) states of the British Commonwealth – Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and United Kingdom – in a period where the Empire as it was known slowly being dismantled.<sup>9</sup>

The first plans were pitched to the Polar Committee in 1953 by individuals in *private* capacity, as the Polar Committee wanted to downplay political issues. A proposal by Sir Vivian ‘Bunny’ Fuchs was most favourably received by the Committee. The CTAE plans did not excite the Commonwealth countries, however. Australia was in the process of planning a National Antarctic Expedition and was unwilling to divert its attention, manpower and funds to another expedition. S.M (Meiring) Naudé, Schonland’s successor at the CSIR, said that they would not be able to justify participation, but that it might be possible that the Weather Bureau would be interested.<sup>10</sup> He added that South Africa may wish to participate as a ‘question of prestige’.<sup>11</sup> The Weather Bureau was not convinced about the meteorological value of the expedition: ‘[w]hatever the romantic and human attraction of a safari across the South Pole might be, it can be said with conviction that the meteorological observations done during the trek will be of little value.’<sup>12</sup> The laying of the depots could potentially be valuable, however, if it was a means for continuous observations from the same location and it could continue after the expedition. Based on the ‘basically free’ information they received from the NBSX, the Weather Bureau proposed that the Union Government make a financial contribution, but that they do not commit themselves yet.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, the South African representative at the Polar Committee meeting said his government was interested in the meteorological possibilities of the expedition, but he offered no concrete assistance.<sup>14</sup> The other Commonwealth governments had a similar attitude. By November 1954 it was feared that, ‘...in the absence of any indication that Commonwealth Governments will provide financial aid, the main justification for the project, i.e. a demonstration of Commonwealth solidarity in the Antarctic, has not so far been achieved.’<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Klaus Dodds, *Pink Ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 59-60.

<sup>10</sup> He nevertheless grabbed the chance to visit Antarctica as an observer and guest of the Americans in the 1960s.

<sup>11</sup> S.M Meiring, WNNR aan Sekretaris van Buitelandse Sake, 22 October 1953, SAB BTS 102/2/4 vol. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Sekretaris van Vervoer aan Sekretaris van Buitelandse Sake, 24 November 1953, SAB BTS 102/2/4 vol. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Polar Committee, 13 May 1954, TNA CO 1024/60.

<sup>15</sup> D.M Cleary, C.R.O. to W.A Morris, C.O, 2 November 1954, TNA CO 1024/60.

In light of the Commonwealth disinclination – the lack of support from Antarctic-adept Australia was especially detrimental – the expedition had to be postponed. It was, however, already publically known that such a journey had been on the cards. This meant that a lack of action would result in a greater loss of prestige than mere postponement of the expedition would. Aggravating the potential for embarrassment was the fact that the IGY planning was gathering momentum, that the Argentinians added yet another base in their strategy of ‘saturating Antarctica with scientific bases,’ and that the Americans were commencing with an impressive flying programme.<sup>16</sup> The United Kingdom subsequently considered employing diplomatic pressure for this ostensibly private expedition. A brief drafted for the meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers the importance of the Expedition was explained as follows: ‘Taking place, as it would, partly in the IGY, it would be an inspiring and striking demonstration of Commonwealth collaboration of a kind that would stir public interest and imagination throughout the world and give a great boost to the idea of the British Commonwealth of Nations...’<sup>17</sup>

Although the goal of displaying Commonwealth solidarity was not necessarily questioned, the means provoked some acerbic comments. One Canadian official remarked that ‘even for Commonwealth solidarity we would not trudge the wastes of Antarctica! If they wanted to buy some huskies or something of that sort, I am sure we could do what we could!’<sup>18</sup>

In their efforts to garner public support, the men behind the CTAE nevertheless persisted with the strategy of emphasising its elevated purpose of ground-breaking exploration and science, adventure and prestige. Their efforts received a huge boost when it became known that Sir Edmund Hillary, whose feat on Mount Everest in 1953 was fresh in Imperial subjects’ minds, would be co-leader.<sup>19</sup> This noticeably raised the public profile of the CTAE and added the much needed celebrity factor to fund-raising efforts.<sup>20</sup> Confidence that the venture would succeed grew. The Secretary of State for the Royal Air Force was singularly fervent in his support for the CTAE and its goals:

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<sup>16</sup> C.C.L Bertram, “Notes for Discussion with Sir John Martin on the problems of FIDS and related problems,” 7 March 1955, TNA CO 1024/60. For a detailed account on the politics within the British Antarctic establishment over the CTAE see Dodds, *Pink Ice*, 59–74.

<sup>17</sup> Preliminary draft of a brief to Commonwealth Prime Ministers Meeting, January 1955, TNA CO 1024/60.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Dodds, *Pink Ice*, 64.

<sup>19</sup> “To the South Pole by Jeep,” *Daily Worker* (10 January 1955) and “New Zealand Antarctic Crossing Plan,” *Daily Telegraph* (11 January 1955)

<sup>20</sup> Klaus Dodds, “The Great Trek: New Zealand and the British/Commonwealth 1955-1958 Trans-Antarctic Expedition,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 33, 1 (January 2005), 93-114.

I must say I am greatly attracted by the idea of this expedition. Apart from the interest both the Foreign Office (F.O.) and Colonial Office (C.O) have in demonstrating control of, and interest in, our Antarctic possessions, here is an opportunity of something imaginative, adventurous, Elizabethan, popular and perhaps ultimately remunerative, in a cooperative Empire adventure at little cost.<sup>21</sup>

The CTAE was also an overt symbolic display on the part of Great Britain that it was still 'Great', that it was still able to play a meaningful role in the world dominated by the USA and the USSR.<sup>22</sup> As Dodds observed, it was a means to put the 'British' back in the 'British Commonwealth.'<sup>23</sup> Dodds illustrated this with the reactions of some FIDS officials' reactions showed when Hillary, the bee-keeper from New Zealand, upstaged the Cambridge-educated doctor.<sup>24</sup> Seen in this context, the question should also be asked why South Africa eventually decided to participate in the CTAE, as publically pandering to the ideal of the Commonwealth was certainly not part of their long-term political agenda.<sup>25</sup>

### ***South African participation in the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition.***

The CSIR was asked to reconsider their position on the CTAE, especially the scientific aspects. Meiring Naude was of the opinion that it would not be to the CSIR's benefit, especially not if they had to channel funds into it. He suggested that it might be of value to the Weather Bureau or the Defence Force.<sup>26</sup> The Weather Bureau was targeting their limited funds and human resources towards Bouvet or Gough Island and was not willing to compromise those plans with a Transantarctic expedition.<sup>27</sup> More reluctance was expressed by the Chief of General Staff, who replied that 'although the Union has a keen interest in the South Pole region, it is not to such extent that active support for the planned expedition can be justified from a military viewpoint.'<sup>28</sup> After failing to receive a positive reply from these departments, the Department of External Affairs also approached Fisheries and Mines.

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<sup>21</sup> Letter signed Phillip, (Secretary of State) (Rt. Hon. Viscount Swinton) to Bill, Secretary of State for Air (The Rt. Hon. Lord De L'Isle and Dudley), 14 January 1955, TNA CO 1024/172.

<sup>22</sup> Dodds, "South Pole Trek," 105.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 105–106.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Lindie Koorts, "D.F Malan: A Political Biography," (Phd dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 2010), 436 – 441.

<sup>26</sup> Naude added that if funds were available through another channel, they would like to send an observer in the field of cosmic rays along with a view to add it to the research programmes of the Universities of Stellenbosch and Pretoria. S.M Naude aan Waarnemende Sekretaris van Buitelandse Sake, "Britse Beleid in die Suidpoolstreek," 24 August 1954, SAB BTS 102/2/4 vol.1.

<sup>27</sup> D.J Joubert, Sekretaris van Vervoer aan Sekretaris van Buitelandse Sake, 7 August 1954, BTS 102/2/4 vol.1.

<sup>28</sup> Hoof van Generale Staf aan Sekretaris van Buitelandse Sake, 30 September 1954, BTS 102/2/4 vol.1.

Fisheries replied that they would benefit from meteorological and oceanographic data from the Antarctic region, but that the nature of the expedition would not justify their involvement.<sup>29</sup> Mines responded that the geological explorations would be valuable, but that an acute staff shortage precluded their participation.<sup>30</sup> It would seem that these Departments were either unaware of the importance attached by claimant countries and the US to ‘active occupation’ as a ticket to the Antarctic, or the Union’s Antarctic interest was actually just not that keen. Either way, these responses again illustrated the lack of a coherent Antarctic policy and continuing uninterest from officials in the finer aspects of Antarctic politics.

What many South African officials were deeply interested in, however, were racial politics. In terms of its racial ideology South Africa’s relationship with the international community was already showing strains, especially on a United Nations (UN) platform. In the discussion of the Vote of his Ministry, Erik Louw, as Minister of External Affairs, had to explain to the House of Assembly why South Africa withdrew from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). According to Louw UNESCO was meddling with South Africa’s domestic affairs by publishing pamphlets attacking South Africa’s ‘internal racial policy’.<sup>31</sup> South Africa’s membership of the UN was not guaranteed either, especially if the UN did not curtail what Louw and his colleagues saw as interference in domestic matters.<sup>32</sup> He then ended by announcing that South Africa will participate in the Antarctic expedition because it had a ‘distinct interest in the Antarctic’, pertaining to meteorology and whaling.<sup>33</sup> It is possible that, with sporadic calls for Antarctica to be put under UN trusteeship – and UNESCO being its likely caretaker – the South African government realised it would then have very little say in Antarctic matters. The South African High Commission also informed Louw that South Africa’s participation in the CTAE would serve as proof of the Union’s interest in the Antarctic, and that South Africa should be included in consultations about this area.<sup>34</sup> By announcing this during the same Vote in which he had to explain South Africa’s withdrawal from UNESCO, it could be that Louw wanted to counter the potential negative reaction by also announcing active participation in an

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<sup>29</sup> Rousseau, Waarnemende Sekretaris Handel en Nywerheid aan Sekretaris van Buitelandse Sake, 27 October 1954, BTS 102/2/4 vol.1.

<sup>30</sup> Sekretaris vir Mynwese aan Sekretaris van Buitelandse Sake, 30 October 1954, BTS 102/2/4 vol.1.

<sup>31</sup> “No Guarantee That S.A. will stay in the United Nations,” *Natal Mercury*, 6 May 1955.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Memorandum by J.J Becker of South Africa House, “Die Voorgestelde Ekspedisie na die Suidpool,” 6 April 1955, SAB BTS 102/2/4 vol. 2.

international enterprise. Furthermore, Schumann was a personal friend of Erik Louw and there was a possibility that he also lobbied Louw on this matter.<sup>35</sup>

The announcement that South Africa will take part in the expedition, it was noted in London, passed ‘practically unnoticed [in] the South African Press.’<sup>36</sup> The lack of media attention was perhaps anticipated and as such the CTAE presented a domestically non-controversial way for the South African cabinet to show nominal support for the Commonwealth. Once Louw made his rather sudden announcement (the Commonwealth Relations Office heard about it in the *Times*), it was for some time unclear exactly what the nature of South Africa’s contribution would be. Eventually, they contributed £10,000 plus a further £8,000 for meteorological equipment and the services of two meteorologists.<sup>37</sup> Although the newspapers did not dwell on it much, there was a definite undertone of patriotism in the reports that two South Africans will join the expedition. This contrasted with the occupation of the Prince Edward Islands, which was rather employed in an incongruous manner to comment on domestic political strife. An article in the nationalist *Die Transvaler* wrote about the ‘two Afrikaners that will plant the Union flag for the first time on the South Pole’, who will ‘make history for South Africa.’<sup>38</sup> It was also significant that the newspaper referred specifically to them as two Afrikaners – as opposed to South Africans – showcasing what was constructed as the patriotic pioneering spirit of that specific white group. (The *Cape Times* referred to South Africans.)<sup>39</sup> Public commentary focussed on their participation in something extraordinary that would be of benefit to the Union’s weather forecasting abilities. An editorial in *Die Transvaler*, again reflecting its republican concerns, observed that ‘the fact that the Union lies some thousand miles from the equator influences its political position. The fact that it lies a little bit farther from the South Pole influences its climatological position.’<sup>40</sup> The money spent on the expedition, they argued, would be well worth it if it helped farmers to know what to expect in the summer months.<sup>41</sup> When probed by a *Cape Times* journalist,

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<sup>35</sup> Jan du Plessis, Schumann’s son-in-law, personal communication (5 December 2010).

<sup>36</sup> Inward Telegram to CRO from U.K High Commissioner in South Africa, “Proposals for a Commonwealth TAE,” 12 May 1955, TNA CO 1024/172. This was an accurate observation – where it was mentioned it was part of longer articles focussing on Louw’s remarks in the House of Assembly in general and far greater attention was paid to the withdrawal from UNESCO. The *Cape Times* had to rely on the *London Times* for information on what the expedition’s aims were. See “Aims of Expedition to South Pole: S.A to Join,” *Cape Times*, 7 May 1955.

<sup>37</sup> Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition Correspondence, TNA CO 1024/173

<sup>38</sup> Anon., “Hulle Gaan S.A Vlag Plant op Suidpool,” *Die Transvaler* (15 October 1955) in SAB BTS 102/2/4 vol. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Hannes la Grange, “I carried Union Flag over the South Pole,” *Cape Times* (22 March 1958).

<sup>40</sup> Editorial, “Kenniss oor die Suidpool,” *Die Transvaler* (11 May 1955).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

Louw commented that ‘at the moment our interest is mainly scientific and meteorological... Participation on the expedition will therefore give us grounds on which we may “stake our claim” as an interested country.’<sup>42</sup> The expression ‘stake our claim’ slightly perturbed British officials,<sup>43</sup> who were reassured that Louw meant ‘interests’ and that he not yet had opportunity to go through the matter thoroughly.<sup>44</sup> Louw had other preoccupations, but a press statement written for him revealed how his Department would have liked the South African interest in the Antarctic to be perceived:

South Africa has made an important contribution to the internationally vital Geophysical Year, 1957-58. We, with the others, have realised the potential value of a world-wide combined onslaught on the physical secrets of the earth and the skies... This radio programme [Springbok Radio’s ‘The Antarctic Story’] will reflect news and data from the present Antarctic expedition [the CTAE], which is, in itself a preparation for next year’s invasion of this unknown territory. Our government has seen fit to contribute £18,000, plus radiosonde equipment and the services of two meteorologists to the Commonwealth effort, recognising South Africa’s unique geographical situation in respect of the Antarctic Circle...and, in particular, to pay tribute to a brave scientific effort.<sup>45</sup>

The Union’s participation was tailored to express that it saw itself as highly regarded in the scientific world, an equal in the ‘world-wide combined onslaught on the physical secrets of the earth and skies.’ The Union also sought to widen its geographical frontiers to include Antarctica – portraying the Union as a global player.

The effort to promote South Africa’s participation in this ‘brave scientific effort’ was nonetheless not a sustained one. Although newspaper articles did reflect a public interest in Antarctica, like the existence of a radio programme such as the ‘Antarctic Story’ on

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<sup>42</sup> “S.A ‘Vitality’ Interested in the Antarctic,” *Cape Times* (13 May 1955).

<sup>43</sup> Inward Telegram to CRO from U.K High Commissioner in South Africa, “Proposals for a Commonwealth TAE,” 12 May 1955, TNA CO 1024/172.

<sup>44</sup> Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition U.K High Commissioner in South Africa to CRO, 1 June 1955, TNA CO 1024/173.

<sup>45</sup> Statement by the Minister of External Affairs – to be Recorded for the Springbok Radio Programme “The Antarctic Story,” 16 March 1956, BTS 102/2/4 vol. 2.

Springbok Radio illustrated, some articles on the CTAE did not even mention South African participation.<sup>46</sup>

The two men seconded to participate in the expedition were J.J. ‘Hannes’ la Grange and Piet S. du Toit, both men that overwintered on Marion Island before.<sup>47</sup> La Grange, whom Fuchs described as a ‘blind date’ that turned out well, also volunteered for Fuchs’ main party – the party that did the actual trekking to the Pole – after his first winter.<sup>48</sup> It was an offer Fuchs gladly accepted.<sup>49</sup> Owing to a shortage of staff, Piet du Toit’s participation was limited to a summer relief visit as he had to go to Marion to install IGY-related equipment instead.<sup>50</sup> On 19 January 1958, Hannes la Grange reached the South Pole as the first South African to do so.<sup>51</sup> He did it in a Sno-Cat nicknamed ‘Haywire’ that flew the South African flag and pulling a sledge sporting a springbok and protea pennant he had embroidered.

There was some recognition that La Grange ‘brought honour to South Africa’,<sup>52</sup> as the first Afrikaner to be at the South Pole but he was hardly treated as a national asset. For instance, the Treasury was reluctant to pay for a plane ticket back to South Africa, preferring that he return by ship. The Minister of Transport intervened in this case.<sup>53</sup> His ‘danger pay’ too elicited bureaucratic debate as he was outside the Union for a longer period of time than was usually covered.<sup>54</sup> A similar paper trail had to be created when Fuchs requested that La Grange join them in London to help process the weather data, as well as to represent the Union of South Africa at receptions as the only South African who had participated in the expedition.<sup>55</sup> It took over six months of interdepartmental correspondence to settle who was

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<sup>46</sup> “Land Grab in the Antarctic,” *Cape Times*, 23 January 1956; “Antarctic Race by UK team,” *Cape Times* (31 January 1956); “Antarctic Race with Time,” *Cape Times* (6 February 1956).

<sup>47</sup> Another version is that both Du Toit and La Grange wrote to Fuchs, who then used his influence to convince Schumann. Private interview, (25 August 2010).

<sup>48</sup> Minutes of the Twentieth Meeting of the Committee of Management: Trans-Antarctic Expedition, 14 August 1956, SAB BTS 102/2/4 Vol 2.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Secretary of Transport to Secretary of the Treasury, “Transantartika ekspedisie,” 7 February 1957, SAB VER 112 AB 16/9/2/92 and J.J. (Hannes) la Grange, “The Beginning: 1 Taking part in the Trans-Antarctic Expedition,” *South African Journal of Antarctic Research*, 21, 2 (1991).

<sup>51</sup> La Grange, “The Beginning 1,” 22.

<sup>52</sup> Letter to Secretary of Transport, 22 February 1958 and Secretary of Transport to Minister of Transport “Transantartika ekspedisie,” 14 March 1958, SAB VER 112 AB 16/9/2/92.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> See for e.g. Secretary of Transport to Secretary of Public Service Commission, “Ongeskiktheidstoelae: Lede van die Statebondsekspedisie na die Suidpoolstreek,” 1 October 1955, SAB VER 112 AB 16/9/2/92.

<sup>55</sup> Secretary of Transport to Minister of Transport, “Transantartika-ekspedisie,” 7 August 1957, SAB VER 112 AB 16/9/2/92.

responsible for a Bovril-cakes and tea bill.<sup>56</sup> Although austerity measures in themselves were not unique to South Africa, these letters again revealed the lack of coordination between Departments and the relative low priority given to La Grange and Du Toit as people who supposedly presented the Union of South Africa. Nevertheless, by the time La Grange reached the Pole, there has been an increase in public awareness of the South African government's interest in Antarctica.<sup>57</sup>

## **More Proposals for a Multilateral Solution to the 'Antarctic Problem'**

### ***Perspectives on a South African claim***

Schumann, in his capacity as Director for the South African Weather Bureau and representative on the international IGY organising committee (CGASI)<sup>58</sup>, was instructed by the Union government to raise the issue of South African interest in Antarctica during his travels to London and Brussels. He alarmed the Commonwealth Relations Office by suggesting that the issue of sovereignty be put on the agenda of the Conference of Commonwealth Meteorologists, asking that they, as meteorologists, push for a united Commonwealth front in policies on Antarctic sovereignty as it will benefit their scientific endeavours. This led to suspicions that South Africa might be considering putting forward an Antarctic claim. Such a claim would have put Britain in a difficult situation. On the one hand, they wanted South Africa to be involved as a British Commonwealth state, as this would strengthen their polar empire. A British official scribbled on the minutes that '...if handled correctly, the Norwegians might well cede a small part of Queen Maud Land to South Africa. Norway does very little with her large sector, and there is surely much to be said for the association of one more Commonwealth country with Antarctica.'<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, the British were keen to avoid the diplomatic quagmire if South Africa laid claim to a part of

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<sup>56</sup> A large amount of correspondence was created with regards to a £4.8.9 canteen bill that had been run-up by P.S. du Toit because he was sea-sick and had to take his tea and the odd Bovril biscuit outside regular hours. See for example Secretary of Treasury to Secretary of Transport "Transantarktika Ekspedisie: Mre PS du Toit en JJ la Grange," 4 January 1960 and Secretary of Transport to Secretary of Public Service Commission "Uitgawes aan boord skip: Mnr P.S du Toit," 15 June 1960, SAB VER 112 AB 16/9/2/92.

<sup>57</sup> Secretary of Transport, DJ Joubert to Minister of Transport, "Fuchs Ekspedisie: Voorgenome Lesingstoer in Suid-Afrika: Toestemming dat Mnr J.J. La Grange, Weerkundige Assistent Graad 1, Lesingstoer Meemaak," 12 August 1958, AB VER 112 AB 16/9/2/92.

<sup>58</sup> As known by its French name, the Comité Spéciale de l'Année Geophysique Internationale.

<sup>59</sup> Note by J.S Whitehead on cover, 19 September 1955, TNA FO 371/119817 A 15229/2.

Antarctica that the British recognised as Norwegian and that had been actively encouraged by their policies.<sup>60</sup>

Brian Roberts, the Foreign Office's polar expert, was of the opinion that Schumann was not 'personally concerned with political aspects other than stimulating his government to provide funds for establishing meteorological stations.'<sup>61</sup> He added, however, that Schumann had close personal friendships with 'several members of cabinet and has been actively pushing for a more forward SA policy in the Antarctic.'<sup>62</sup> So far, Roberts noted, Schumann had been very successful in his endeavours.<sup>63</sup> Roberts' observation rang true in as far as Schumann succeeded in raising at least awareness, if not action, from important political figures. Schumann was also cited as the inspiration behind a note emanating from Minister Louw's office, in which he too mooted a Norwegian surrender of part of their sector to the Union. The matter, however, remained dormant.<sup>64</sup>

Schumann used geopolitical arguments to lobby for fuller South African participation in Antarctic affairs. As early as in 1954, he wrote a feature article in the Afrikaans illustrated magazine *Die Brandwag* entitled 'Race of the World's nations to the South Pole'.<sup>65</sup> In the 'did you know' section, he pointed out four facts about the South Pole.<sup>66</sup> These included that nations were spending vast amounts on expeditions and that politics played a role. He also pointed out that if all the Antarctic ice melted Cape Town will be under water and that there may be 'major mineral treasures' in Antarctica.<sup>67</sup> The article extolled the values of scientific research, making political powers aware of the potential mineral value. A sketched map accompanied the article and contained military references. It was part of the discourse of an 'onslaught' on the Antarctic, as if its' being unknown was dangerous, an enemy to modern science, an enemy to be annihilated. Schumann, for his indiscretions, succeeded bringing

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<sup>60</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>61</sup> Brian B Roberts on Schumann in Minutes by C.C.C Tickell, 26 May 1955, TNA FO 371/114001.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> "Memorandum 'The Union and Antarctica,'" March 1958, BTS 102/2/7/1 Annexure Jacket F1. A minute written by Schumann to his departmental head was also passed on to the Department of External Affairs, requesting them to authorise Schumann to speak on behalf of the Union. The minute contained suggestions that the Union moot the possibility of a conference to divide Antarctica in spheres of influence, including the seven claimant countries, the USA, Germany and 'one or two other countries'. He also suggested that the Union consider ways and means to acquire a sector – perhaps approaching Australia or Norway. The matter was however not followed up.

<sup>65</sup> The Afrikaans title refers to 'Volkere', a word closer to the German concept of a *Volk* rather than a nation state. T.E.W Schumann, "Wedloop van Volkere na Suidpool," *Die Brandwag* (24 February 1954).

<sup>66</sup> It should be remembered that in the 1950s, (and even today) Antarctica was generally but erroneously referred to as the South Pole or South Pole region.

<sup>67</sup> Schumann, "Wedloop van Volkere na Suidpool."

South Africa's interests to the attention of individuals like Roberts who were the drivers behind Britain's Antarctic policy. In a way, Schumann's meddling forced South African officials to update and consolidate the Union's Antarctic policy as a separate policy fitting in with larger geopolitical strategies. Even though it remained a vague policy known to but a few secretaries and desk clerks, it was something that they could draw on when asked to consider a Commonwealth approach to the United States on the question of Antarctica.

### ***Soviet Activities and British proposals for an International Authority, 1955–1957***

Late in 1955, the CRO asked the 'Old Commonwealth', New Zealand, Australia and South Africa and Canada, if they were willing to coordinate their respective Antarctic policies and approach the United States together. South Africa agreed to this because, when the 'time comes for economic exploitation and development,' the Union will be the 'natural and appropriate base from which such enterprises will operate.'<sup>68</sup>

Britain also wanted to keep in the loop of South Africa's Antarctic intentions.<sup>69</sup> When the Union relayed their decision to Britain to partake in the joint approach to the United States, they also intimated that they might wish to acquire certain territorial rights in Antarctica, in consultation with other countries in Antarctica.<sup>70</sup> Along with Schumann's references and the request to set up a meteorological station on Gough Island, it led the British to believe that South Africa 'was manoeuvring herself to be internationally recognised as having interest in the Antarctic.'<sup>71</sup> South African presence in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic had strategic repercussions for Britain. It could make it possible to erect radar screens on Gough Island and Antarctica to detect enemy missiles, if such security implications could be seriously considered.<sup>72</sup> There were also on-going discussions that the South African maritime security zone should be extended beyond 50° south, which would give the South African Navy responsibilities off the Antarctic coast, as part of the Simons' Town Agreement.<sup>73</sup> The *Rand*

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<sup>68</sup> Jordaan, South Africa House to Robin LD Jasper, CRO, 28 December 1955, TNA FO 371/119817.

<sup>69</sup> Rene Laverde, "The Development, Pursuit and Maintenance of a South African Antarctic Policy: 1926-1988," (MA thesis, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 1990), 44.

<sup>70</sup> This statement was made on 24 December 1955. "Union and Antarctica," March 1958, SAB BTS 102/2/7/1 Annexure Jacket F1.

<sup>71</sup> Minute by Whitehead, 31 January 1956, TNA FCO 371/119817.

<sup>72</sup> IFS Vincent to G. Fitzmaurice, 6 February 1956, TNA FCO 371/119817.

<sup>73</sup> W.J Smith to Robin Jasper, 19 January 1956, TNA FCO/ 119817. With the Simon's Town Agreement, the Royal Navy gave up its naval base at Simon's Town and transferred the command of the South African Navy to the South African government. In return, South Africa was to buy naval vessels from the United

*Daily Mail* quoted American sources that likewise linked the geopolitics of Antarctica with Simon's Town. It reported that Soviet naval used the publicity given the Simon's Town change-over to 'draw attention to Western defence activities as being designed for aggression rather than defence.'<sup>74</sup> Citing the *United States News and World Report* it observed that the 'South Polar Waters' linked the principal oceans of the world. It continued: 'the Western world's sea communications would be seriously hampered by a score or two of Soviet submarines operating between the Antarctic continent and the southern tips of South America and Africa.'<sup>75</sup>

The 'proximity' of the USSR via Antarctica was foregrounded when they suddenly announced at a CSAGI meeting in Paris in July 1955 that they too would send an expedition to Antarctica. A country with vast Arctic experience, participating in the IGY offered the Soviets an opportunity to parade their scientific and technological abilities.<sup>76</sup> In keeping with the symbolism of the geography of firsts and extremes, the Soviets planned, amongst others, a base at the Pole-of-Inaccessibility as the Americans already planned one at the geographic South Pole. A British Antarctic expert remarked that 'Russian bases in the Antarctic are not sited, like everyone else's, at the most convenient points for easy access or economical approach, but are strategically ringed around the Antarctic continent. One is certainly nearly opposite the Cape in South Africa.'<sup>77</sup>

Not everyone thought the strategic concerns realistic. One official pointed out that a radar screen on Antarctica would only benefit South Africa in the 'improbable event of an attack by Australia or New Zealand.'<sup>78</sup> Amongst themselves, the South African officials were slightly irritated with the way in which the United States wanted to take the 'lead and final discretion' with regards to Antarctica. They argued that because of its geographical position 'South Africa has a greater claim than the USA, not even to mention Russia.'<sup>79</sup> The USSR,

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Kingdom and allow Royal Navy vessels use of the base. The United Kingdom terminated the agreement in 1975. David Childs, *Britain since 1945: A Political History* (London: Routledge, 1992), 231.

<sup>74</sup> "Claim to Antarctic Bases by Russian Believed Likely," *Rand Daily Mail*, 16 September 1955.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Howkins, "Frozen Empires," 255. Referring to Needell, Howkins also notes that although the exclusion of Russia was one of the central tenets of the official US policy towards Antarctica, one of the broader political motivations of the IGY was to force Russia to display its scientific expertise. Allan Needell, *Science, Cold War and the American State: Lloyd V. Berkner and the Balance of Professional Ideals* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 2000).

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in Peter Beck, *The International Politics of Antarctica* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), 72.

<sup>78</sup> Minute by P. Mallet, 8 February 1956, TNA FCO 371/119817.

<sup>79</sup> Marginalia on A Hamilton, Counsellor of Embassy, South African Embassy, Washington D.C. to Secretary of External Affairs, 8 March 1956, SAB BTS 102/2 vol.15.

however, was becoming more active in the Antarctic and, by the time the IGY was in full swing; their exclusion from international discussions about Antarctica became near impossible.<sup>80</sup>

The United States were in the process of repositioning their Antarctic policy and were not willing to support either Britain or its own South American allies in Antarctica. The official exchange of information on Antarctic affairs increased, especially as far as the Soviets were concerned, but talks about a formalised agreement were inconclusive.<sup>81</sup>

### ***The Indian Campaign on UN Trusteeship of Antarctica***

In 1956, on the eve of the IGY the Indian delegation to the United Nations under Arthur Lall proposed that the question of Antarctica be put on the UN agenda because, according to them, the idea of ‘Antarctic Nations’, especially the sovereignty disputes between Chile, Argentina and Britain, were out-dated relics of European colonialism.<sup>82</sup> Delegates were shown a preliminary explanatory memorandum that concentrated on the strategic, climatic, geophysical and economic significance of Antarctica. Their appeal would be to the House of Assembly to call for the ‘peaceful utilisation of the Antarctica [sic]... and ...that the area shall not be used in any manner that would promote the increase of world tensions ... or extend to this area the influence and effect of existing tensions.’<sup>83</sup> Behind the Indian proposition was Krishna Menon, a ‘veteran anti-colonial campaigner’ who was looking for ‘new ways to challenge European imperialism.’<sup>84</sup>

In *Die Burger*, India’s request was described as another episode in the ‘cold war’ over ‘6 000 000 square miles of eternal ice and snow’ that had been going on for ‘longer than all the ideological differences between the East and the West.’<sup>85</sup> The reporter pointed out that Antarctica’s strategic value was still unknown and discussions about territory pre-emptive. The claimant countries were strongly opposed to the idea and the United States, although a little more sympathetic, also voted *against* its inscription into the agenda. As noted

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<sup>80</sup> “The Union and Antarctica,” March 1958, SAB BTS 102/2/7/1: Annexure Jacket F1.

<sup>81</sup> The US, of course, was faced with whole different set of geopolitics than Britain as far as the South American countries were concerned and this too played a role. See Howkins, “Frozen Empires.”

<sup>82</sup> Secret: “Versoek van Indië om Inskrywing van die Kwessie van Antarktika op die Agenda van die Verenigde Nasies Algemene Vergadering,” undated, SAB BTS 102/2/8. Also Adrian Howkins, “Defending the polar empire: opposition to India’s proposal to raise the ‘Antarctic Question’ at the United Nations in 1956,” *Polar Record* 44, 228 (2008), 35–44.

<sup>83</sup> Explanatory Memorandum, undated, SAB BTS 102/2/8

<sup>84</sup> Howkins, “Defending the Polar Empire,” 37.

<sup>85</sup> “Indië Wil V.V.O die Voog oor Suidpoolstreek Maak: Menige Land het al ‘n Kleim,” *Die Burger* (29 February 1956).

previously, South Africa already had a fraught relationship with UN and left UNESCO. In a similar vein, the South Africans felt that including the ‘Question of Antarctica’ on the UN agenda, would not only call the Soviets to the table, but will exclude the South Africans from ‘any influence it would possibly have been able to exercise over the matter.’<sup>86</sup> They also distrusted India’s motives: ‘It was felt that Kirshna Memnon and possibly Nehru thought up the idea to further their favourite pose of “peacemakers” between West and East.’<sup>87</sup> South Africa decided to vote against the inscription and the permanent secretary to the United Nations was urged to ‘use every opportunity to emphasise the Union’s interest in the South Pole region.’<sup>88</sup> Eventually, facing opposition from the Latin-American bloc as well as the United States, and global attention being diverted to the mounting Suez crisis, India chose to withdraw the proposal.<sup>89</sup> It seemed as if at least for the duration of the IGY, scientific posturing on the Ice would take precedence over political posturing in government despatches.

## The International Geophysical Year 1957–1959

The IGY heralded a sort of scientific arms race, or as Brzezinski called it, ‘scientific Olympics’.<sup>90</sup> South Africa did not participate in the IGY on a large scale, but it did make tangible contributions to IGY activities. As part of the groundwork in the run-up to 1957, the South African Weather Bureau published *The Meteorology of the Antarctic*. In the course of compiling the data, professional ties were forged between the South African Weather Bureau and its counterparts in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Britain, France and Norway were cemented.<sup>91</sup> The Departments of Defence and Transport drew substantially on their resources in establishing a station on Gough Island and the reconnaissance of Bouvet. South Africa was a much smaller player than the United States with *Operation Deepfreeze*, or the Soviets with their remote bases. The scale and theatricality of the operations of the two superpowers, were probably instrumental in it receiving more attention from the South

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<sup>86</sup> Secret, “Versoek van Indië om Inskrywing van die Kwessie van Antarktika op die Agenda van die Verenigde Nasies Algemene Vergadering,” undated, SAB BTS 102/2/8.

<sup>87</sup> “The Union and Antarctica,” March 1958, SAB BTS 102/2/7/1, Annexure Jacket.

<sup>88</sup> G.P Jooste, Secretary of Foreign Affairs to D.B Sole, the Permanent Representative of South Africa at the United Nations, 12 September 1956, SAB BTS 102/2/8.

<sup>89</sup> Howkins, “Defending the Polar Empire,” 42. Another attempt from India to put Antarctica on the UN agenda in 1958 met with even less sympathy as the Treaty negotiations were already underway.

<sup>90</sup> Matthew Brzezinski, *Red Moon Rising* (Times Books/ Henry Holt & Company: New York, 2007), 92.

<sup>91</sup> “Navorsing: Klimatologie en Meteorologie van Antarktika en die Suidelike Eilande,” Correspondence from February 1955 – February 1956, SAB/ DWB 155 M 18/21. Schumann and his colleagues often had to approach the directors of foreign weather bureaus through diplomatic channels, but the correspondence soon became more friendly and personal. Argentina and Chile were not consulted.

African press than South Africa's little island stations and endeavours.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, it was South Africa's island activities that were used to help justify their place amongst the big Antarctic Nations and helped establish scientific research programmes within the Antarctic sphere that would continue for decades to come.<sup>93</sup>

It is difficult to understate how ardently Schumann pursued the ideal of a chain of Southern Hemispheric weather stations. The working paper for South Africa's meteorological proposal concentrated on the idea of 'weather ships'. Illustriously, Schumann called it 'little short of tragedy' that, in view of the 'colossal sums of money being expended ... with comparatively little extra effort and expenditure, a reasonable meteorological coverage of the whole Southern Hemisphere is attainable.'<sup>94</sup> The plan suggested stationary weather ships at certain points in the south Atlantic and south Pacific, so that there were no 'huge blank spots' of data. The suggestion was to involve countries who thought it too onerous to contemplate IGY-specific programmes.<sup>95</sup> Schumann concluded: 'as matters now stand the maintenance of even only one weather ship would be of much greater significance than the establishment of several additional stations on Antarctica.'<sup>96</sup> Eventually the Weather Bureau took responsibility for producing daily weather maps of the area between 20° and 90° south. In 1957, the International Council for Scientific Unions (ICSU) created SCAR, the Special (later Scientific) Committee on Antarctic Research. South Africa was represented by M P (Maarten) van Rooy, who succeeded Schumann as Director of the Weather Bureau. At the first meeting of the South African National Antarctic Committee<sup>97</sup> in July 1958, influential South African scientists met to discuss the future of South African research in Antarctica after the IGY. The minutes of this meeting was passed along to the Department of External Affairs by Meiring Naude, the Director of the CSIR, with a note that the information 'should prove of some value ... in the view of the important role of scientific research in these

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<sup>92</sup> Generally, the IGY was best remembered for the launch of *Sputnik I* by the USSR on 4 October 1957, which catalysed the space race between the US and the USSR. One of the newspapers that covered a number of Antarctic matters, the *Cape Times*, for instance, devoted a number of articles to the adventures and misadventures of Deep Freeze. Tellingly, its Afrikaans counterpart, *Die Burger* made very little mention of the same events. "Polar scones still fresh after 8 years," *Cape Times* (28 January 1955); "1000 Mile Ordeal in Polar Plane," *Cape Times* (11 January 1956); "Shackleton's Hit found in Antarctic," *Cape Times* (13 January 1955); "Pole Landings Postponed," *Cape Times* (17 January 1955).

<sup>93</sup> A good example would be the space physics research programme started at the Potchefstroom Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys (currently the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus).

<sup>94</sup> "Weather Ships in the Southern Hemisphere. Submitted by The South African Weather Bureau," 21 June 1956, SAB DWB 20M11/6/1/7.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> It is unclear from the agenda if they were aware of their predecessor. Owing to the small size of the South African scientific community, it is highly likely that they were.

discussions.<sup>98</sup> The links between science and politics were not obfuscated by the scientists, who not only had their own political agendas but who also had to acknowledge and incorporate them to further their own scientific ambitions. At this particular meeting, however, the strategic-political issues prevailed. There was a strong suspicion amongst the South Africans that Gough, Tristan da Cunha and Marion Island were purposefully included by the Western bloc into SCAR's sphere of interest to include South Africa into the *status quo* of countries with a presence in Antarctica. South Africa also decided to continue with the station on Gough Island after the IGY, because of the valuable weather data, but also because it strengthened South Africa's general position in Antarctic matters.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, the scientist also felt that in the near future, active participation would exclusively pertain to continental research, which was strongly encouraged by the South African scientists, although the political powers that be seem not to have realised its importance, at least not yet.<sup>100</sup>

The IGY was planned for 1957–58 during an approaching period of maximum solar activity. When the Soviets belatedly announced their participation in the IGY, it underscored the political tensions that such a year might bring.<sup>101</sup> As Howkins pointed out, however, Berkner was not naïve about the potential political implications of the IGY. He was indeed very aware thereof and perhaps even saw it a way to revive American interest in the Antarctic.<sup>102</sup> Although not necessarily the Utopian scientific event that it became hallowed as, the scientific, political and legal impact of the IGY should not be underestimated.<sup>103</sup> The IGY was judged such a success that it was extended for another year as the International Geophysical Cooperation.<sup>104</sup> It was also characterised by a typical Cold War *détente* situation – as long as the Soviets stayed, so would the Americans and so would their allies.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> S.M Naude to Secretary for External Affairs, 23 July 1958, SAB BTS 102/2/9/1 vol. 1.

<sup>99</sup> H.P Smit, Secretary of Transport to Secretary of Foreign Affairs, 4 September 1958, SAB BTS 102/2/6 vol.1.

<sup>100</sup> S.M Naude to Secretary for External Affairs, 23 July 1958, SAB BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.1.

<sup>101</sup> Christy Collis and Klaus Dodds, "Assault on the unknown: the historical and political geographies of the International Geophysical Year (1957–8)," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 34 (2008): 555–573.

<sup>102</sup> Howkins, "Frozen Empires," 249.

<sup>103</sup> Collis and Dodds, "Assault on the unknown," 572.

<sup>104</sup> G.E Fogg, *A History of Antarctic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 175.

<sup>105</sup> Stephen Pyne, *The Ice, a Journey to Antarctica* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986), 347.

## The Antarctic Treaty: 1958–1960

### *US-led negotiations for a solution to the Antarctic problem*

Discussions about an international solution continued throughout the IGY.<sup>106</sup> In March 1958 the Union of South Africa was one amongst eleven nations to receive the Aide-Memoire from the United States, the country with the clout to bring the different parties to the table. Referring to the successful IGY, the United States proposed that the twelve nations with ‘direct interest in Antarctica’ discuss the creation of an international agreement to ensure continued scientific investigation and cooperation in a free and peaceful atmosphere.<sup>107</sup>

Major players such as Britain were increasingly wary of the rising costs of ‘effective occupation’ and more open to an international agreement. The ‘threat’ that the Soviets would have had to be included in an international agreement was paradoxically neutralised by the USSR’s extensive participation in the IGY – making their being party to an agreement ‘inescapable’.<sup>108</sup> In a way, this also eased the entry of the Union, Belgium and Japan, whose previous exclusion was based partly on exactly that threat. The invitation prompted an updated memorandum on the Union and Antarctica, from which it transpired that the Union’s interests in Antarctica were not seen as quite legitimate by other countries.<sup>109</sup> Apart from the fact that this could lead to the Union’s eventual exclusion from the discussions, they were also worried that this might lead to the inclusion of others with similarly tenuous claims. J G (John) Stewart, South African Chargé d’Affaires in Washington DC and the individual most involved on the South African side of the preliminary Treaty discussions, early on questioned Ambassador Daniels, who coordinated the discussions for the United States, about the future rights of accession by countries who did not participate in Antarctic activities during the IGY. Daniels reportedly responded that ‘...it might not be polite to exclude the possibilities of accessions given the principle of freedom of access for scientific cooperation... however he doubted whether any other countries would be able to show sufficient real and direct interest to qualify accession.’<sup>110</sup> South African officials interpreted this to mean that at least in the

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<sup>106</sup> “The Union and the Antarctic,” March 1958, BTS 102/2/7/1 Annexure Jacket F1. Amongst other things, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada (as observers) drew up a working paper in September 1957 setting out different possibilities for a way forward.

<sup>107</sup> Laverde, “The Development, Pursuit and Maintenance of a South African Antarctic Policy, 1926-1988,” 5.

<sup>108</sup> “The Union and the Antarctic,” March 1958, BTS 102/2/7/1 Annexure Jacket F1.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Laverde, “The Development, Pursuit and Maintenance of a South African Antarctic Policy, 1926-1988,” 5.

near future; India would have ‘no part to play in Antarctica’.<sup>111</sup> They seemed relieved that the proposals excluded India, which probably explains why their first response after receiving the aide memoire from the United States was to enquire which Commonwealth countries were included.<sup>112</sup>

All the countries invited, including the Soviet Union, accepted.<sup>113</sup> Senior diplomats from the countries represented started hammering out the details of an agreement in June 1958, keeping it deliberately low-key and without formal records.<sup>114</sup> The conference was scheduled for October 1959, as they wanted to reach a conclusion before the next United Nations General Assembly. This would have precluded broader participation and a kind of ‘trusteeship’ solution that would dilute the control and influence of the twelve powers.<sup>115</sup> During the discussions, South Africa’s central issues included withdrawal clauses (that would allow the Soviet Union to withdraw), the non-militarisation of the continent,<sup>116</sup> and the accession of the countries outside the club of twelve.<sup>117</sup>

South Africa’s inputs at the pre-conference talks were not particularly revealing or controversial when compared to, for instance, Russia’s surprise announcement that they support a complete moratorium on the use of nuclear power in Antarctica. Their major efforts included preventing Antarctica from being used as a nuclear test site and to keep others from making easily claims to the continent based on ‘activities.’<sup>118</sup> South Africa was willing, however, to support an accession protocol. According to the proposed protocol, countries could accede to the Treaty if at least a two-thirds majority, but preferably all signatories, approve of their accession based on international co-operative investigation in Antarctica. After all, the directive stated, ‘Antarctic research is an extremely expensive “hobby”, a proviso such as this would undoubtedly restrict entry to the “Antarctic Club” to very few.’<sup>119</sup> The latter statement also signified the importance attached to prestige in this particular aspect

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> The scholarship on South African- Indian relations is growing. See, for example, the special issue South Africa/ India: Re-Imagining the Disciplines of the *South African Historical Journal* 57 (2007).

<sup>113</sup> They included the United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Norway Argentina, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Africa and the USSR.

<sup>114</sup> Laverde, “The Development, Pursuit and Maintenance of a South African Antarctic Policy, 1926-1988,” 50.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 51

<sup>116</sup> To say that Antarctica was demilitarised is anomalous as Antarctica was never militarised in the sense that militaries from opposing countries were stationed there for a long period of time, engaging in battle on the continent. The military presence was of course extensive, but under the public pretext of support for a scientific operation.

<sup>117</sup> Laverde, “The Development, Pursuit and Maintenance of a South African Antarctic Policy, 1926-1988,” 53.

<sup>118</sup> “Directive, Antarctic Conference: Washington October 1959,” SAB BTS 102/2/7 vol.1.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

of international relations – a way of belonging to a superior and elite group. Other matters were not really even related to Antarctica as continent at all. South Africa was particularly keen that the Treaty should not compel the Union to become a member of UNESCO.<sup>120</sup> According to the South Africans, there was unanimous agreement that the principle of freedom of scientific research was basic to the Treaty<sup>121</sup> and since its inception, it was planned that ‘the main emphasis in [the Treaty’s] presentation to the world was to be placed on the continuation of the IGY programme.’<sup>122</sup> In the wake of the IGY scientific activity appeared to be the golden key for South Africa not to be locked out of the exclusive Antarctic club.

### ***The Establishment of the South African Committee for Antarctic Research***

The South African Committee for Antarctic Research (SACAR) grew out of the country’s steering committee for the IGY, with many of the same committee members.<sup>123</sup> In a memorandum drawn up by the inaugural meeting, they recommended that South Africa conduct research in Antarctica in a variety of geophysical disciplines, including oceanography, glaciology and geology. Interestingly, they stated that ‘the scientific value of the different projects are well known and will not be further expounded upon in this memorandum.’<sup>124</sup> Little explanation came across the bureaucrats’ desks. What was expounded was the potential political value. Many countries extended their Antarctic research programmes for five to ten years. It was readily perceived that countries, ‘through active participation in Antarctic activities, wanted to be recognised as interested parties and consequently as members of SCAR.’<sup>125</sup> The inclusion of Marion, Gough and Tristan da Cunha in the SCAR area was seen as ‘a deliberate manoeuvre of the current western majority in SCAR to maintain South Africa’s status as a member... Assurance of any claims by South

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<sup>120</sup> ‘There would appear to be some prospect that UNESCO will sooner or later become involved and while this may not be entirely palatable to the Union there would seem to be no way to avoid this...it would seem that our best safeguard lies in the non-compulsive...wording of the American draft’ “Directive, Antarctic Conference: Washington October 1959,” SAB BTS 102/2/7/1 vol.1.

<sup>121</sup> C du Plessis to Secretary for External Affairs, Background Papers, Antarctic Treaty, 18 September 1959, SAB BTS 102/2/7/1 vol.1.

<sup>122</sup> “The Union and the Antarctic,” March 1958, BTS 102/2/7/1 Annexure Jacket F1.

<sup>123</sup> S.M Naude to the Secretary for External Affairs, 23 July 1958, BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.1.

<sup>124</sup> Memorandum: “Suid-Afrika se deelname aan Antarktiese Navorsing na 1958,” BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.1.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid ‘...lande is wat deur aktiewe deelname aan die antarktiese bedrywighede erkenning as belanghebbende land en gevolglik as lede van SCAR wil erlang,’

Africa to be an interested country in as far as Antarctica is concerned, may in the near future wholly depend on active participation in events on the Antarctic continent.’<sup>126</sup>

Officially, the islands were included for biological reasons.<sup>127</sup> At the time SCAR was the only international body to focus exclusively on Antarctica and although it was a scientific body, with no explicit political mandate, the scientist-bureaucrats attending the meetings were adept at assuaging their politicians to further scientific agendas.<sup>128</sup>

SACAR recommended that the government send scientific deputations to a variety of international meetings, especially those gatherings where closer ties to other Southern Hemisphere countries could be forged. Further, they asked that the government send scientists as members of other expeditions.<sup>129</sup> Attaching scientists to pre-existing international conferences and structures was not only easier, but in geophysical sciences, especially meteorology and ionospheric studies, international cooperation and standardisation were vital. Presciently, SACAR also recommended that in lieu of Norwegian financial difficulties, South Africa consider aiding them financially and sending one or two scientists, preferably a meteorologist and geologist, on the overwintering team for 1959, saying that the ‘experiences by these two units may later prove to be invaluable to the Union.’<sup>130</sup> The recommendations were laid before the Secretary of External Affairs in the view of the ‘important role of scientific research’ in the current (pre-Treaty conference) discussions on Antarctica.<sup>131</sup>

### ***The South African ‘loan’ of Norway Station***

Although South Africa was invited to the discussions on Antarctica ostensibly because of their participation in the IGY, they knew and were also reminded that there were bases on which their participation could be challenged. It was, for instance, feared that in the light of South Africa’s inclusion, Poland may question Polish exclusion from the Treaty, as the Polish too had a tenuous but traceable history in Antarctic exploration.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Memorandum: “Suid-Afrika se deelname aan Antarktiese Navorsing na 1958,” BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.1.

<sup>127</sup> David W.H. Walton, “The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research and the Antarctic Treaty,” Paul A. Berkman, Michael A. Lang, David W.H. Walton and Oran R. Young, eds, *Science Diplomacy: Antarctica, Science and the Governance of International Spaces* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2011), 77.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>129</sup> Memorandum: “Suid-Afrika se deelname aan Antarktiese Navorsing na 1958,” BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.1.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> S.M Naudé to Secretary for External Affairs, 23 July 1958, BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.1.

<sup>132</sup> The Polish geologist, Henryk Arctowski who was part of the complement of the *Belgica* (1897–1899). They were compelled to overwinter when the ship was beset in ice and Arctowski and others used the opportunity

This made the Union officials anxious to affirm their status as an Antarctic nation, and in May 1959 they held an emergency meeting during which it was decided to approach the Norwegians, with whom the Union already had a working relationship in science planning (mostly through the endeavours of Schumann) and of course in polar logistics. The IGY bases Maudheim and Norway Station were, of course, in the ‘African quadrant’ of Antarctica. Furthermore, the South African Navy had to seriously consider acquiring a polar ship, primarily ‘to emphasise the seriousness with which the Union regards its Antarctic activities and interests.’<sup>133</sup>

As the preparatory talks proceeded, US Ambassador Daniels warned South Africa that it would have to expand its participation in Antarctic activities on the continent if it wanted to retain its membership to the Treaty group and that it was desirable that South Africa take at least some leadership in ‘Antarctic and Southern Hemisphere science.’<sup>134</sup> Simultaneously Norway, whose Antarctic legacy was far less disputable than that of South Africa, was seriously considering withdrawing from their IGY stations, Maudheim and Norway Station, as they could not find the necessary funds to keep them running. This caused some worry amongst the Western powers at the Treaty, as it was feared that the station might then be taken over by the Soviet Union. The Soviets already operated three stations on Antarctica. It was suggested that the Union ‘might welcome this opportunity of strengthening its uncertain position in the Antarctic Continent at considerably less effort and expense than, for instance, establishing its own base.’<sup>135</sup> Up until then, as one directive succinctly summarised, ‘the Union’s record [in Antarctica], while useful, has not been spectacular nor sustained.’<sup>136</sup>

Although South Africa already had ‘enough meteorological information’<sup>137</sup>, there were several other advantages to a meteorological station on Antarctica. Firstly, it would bolster South Africa’s status as an Antarctic Power and strengthen its position at the Treaty Conference. Secondly, it would contribute to the enthusiasm of scientists and add to their

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for research and the scientific output was considerable. G.E. Fogg, *A History of Antarctic Science*, 112. Based on this background, Poland applied to partake in the Treaty discussions in 1959. They were turned down for not having participated on Antarctica during the IGY. If they chose to pursue the matter through other means, such as the World Court, the subsequent scrutiny might have proved a major embarrassment to the Treaty nations and the legitimacy of South Africa’s participation seriously doubted. Memorandum: “Suid-Afrika se deelname aan Antarktiese Navorsing na 1958,” BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.1.

<sup>133</sup> Letter to Mr Botha, 2 June 1959 and Minutes of a Meeting of the Steering Committee of SANCAR, 3 June 1959, SAB BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.1.

<sup>134</sup> Memorandum: “Suid-Afrika se deelname aan Antarktiese Navorsing na 1958,” BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.1.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Directive, Antarctic Conference: Washington October 1959, SAB BTS 102/2/7/1 vol.1.

<sup>137</sup> Memorandum: “Suid-Afrika se deelname aan Antarktiese Navorsing na 1958,” BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.1.

prestige in the scientific world. Geological research had the additional advantage of possibly shedding light on the geological similarities and continuities between Antarctica and South Africa, which ‘will emphasise one of the foundations of our Antarctic interests.’<sup>138</sup> Lastly, it would also give South Africa a foot to stand on, should it decide to acquire Antarctic territory in the future.<sup>139</sup>

Significantly, taking over Norway station would also forestall the Russians from establishing a ‘second base within 2500 miles of Cape Town.’<sup>140</sup> Indeed, a handwritten note in the margins of the first draft of the memorandum to the South African cabinet, urged the compiler to put more emphasis on the strategic implications. A later draft duly asked, ‘is it too far-fetched to point out that the Union may after a while be infiltrated from the south as well as the north?’<sup>141</sup> The cabinet approved of a station in May 1959. The Norwegians offered to loan the buildings to the Union free of charge and to sell them the scientific and support equipment at the base for a token half of the purchase price.<sup>142</sup>

In September 1959, Hannes la Grange received a phone call from Prime Minister Verwoerd, who told him he was given the duty to lead the first South African National Antarctic Expedition to Norway Station. He was purportedly told that he was the only person with the necessary background and skill to lead such an expedition, ‘his country needed him.’<sup>143</sup> He also had to accompany a small technical party to London, Oslo and Bremerhaven to start with the logistic operations such as the buying of clothes and equipment.<sup>144</sup> Having previously made a good impression on Fuchs, La Grange relied on him and the British Crown Agents to

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<sup>138</sup> Cabinet Memorandum c. June 1959, SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.1. It was mentioned that part of the geology was, ‘in fact... called the Karoo system.’

<sup>139</sup> Cabinet memoranda on Antarctica, undated, probably August 1959. SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.1.

<sup>140</sup> “Memorandum oor Moontlike Deelname van Unie aan Antarktika Bedrywigheede,” 26 June 1959, SAB BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.1.

<sup>141</sup> Cabinet memoranda on Antarctica, undated, probably August 1959. SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.1.

<sup>142</sup> The approach was made through their Washington DC office with the help of United States diplomats. At first the Union proposed to share the base on a fifty-fifty per cent basis. The Norwegian decision to abandon the station was, however, irrevocable. A firm offer had to be made to the Norwegians, who expressed scepticism that the Union could muster enough funding. Ambassador of the Union of South Africa, Washington DC to Secretary of External Affairs, Pretoria, 10 September 1959; Memorandum oor Moontlike Deelname van die Unie aan Antarktika Bedrywigheede, 26 June 1959; Secretary of External Affairs, Pretoria to the Ambassador of the Union of South Africa, Washington DC, 26 August 1959, SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.1.

<sup>143</sup> Conversation with Mettie la Grange, Hannes la Grange’s widow, Johannesburg (15 October 2010).

<sup>144</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the South African Committee for Antarctic Research, 9 September 1959, SAB BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.2.

pull together an expedition in three months.<sup>145</sup> Transport even considered approaching the countries ‘behind the iron curtain’ but before contact could be made, External Affairs advised them that this would be unwise.<sup>146</sup> For both political reasons (the Treaty Conference in Washington DC) and logistical reasons (they could send an expedition with the ship that went to fetch the Norwegians, and receive some basic cold weather training), they wanted the first South African Antarctic Expedition to leave late November, early December 1959.<sup>147</sup> It was felt that it was so important to get a team to Antarctica as soon as possible, that ‘the scientific observational activities can be...put on the backburner.’<sup>148</sup>

Because negotiations over the South African-Norwegian contract were taking place at the time of preliminary Treaty discussions, its exact wording was the object of mild contention. South Africa did not want anything in the contract to imply that they recognised Norwegian sovereignty; neither did Norway want their sovereignty over Queen Maud Land questioned as a result of the Union taking over their station.<sup>149</sup> The technical party was already busy negotiating the detail in Oslo before the contract was made official. On 23 September 1959 it was leaked in the Norwegian press that the Union will take over the Norwegian Antarctic Station. Soon after, the South African press picked it up as well. There was little pretence that the Union set up the base for ‘scientific’ reasons – the link with the Treaty negotiations was easily made. This was reflected for instance in headlines such as ‘S.A. Stakes claim in the Antarctic: Weather Base to be set up’; ‘Union’s ‘hush hush’ bid for Polar Base’; ‘SA claim in Antarctica: Louw Silent’ and ‘SA will back her interest in the Antarctic’.<sup>150</sup>

The newspapers also noted the scientific advantages of such a weather base and unlike the occupation of the Prince Edward Islands, some of it was nationalistically coloured. Even the *Rand Daily Mail* called the base a

new feather in the Union’s cap... and not merely because another speck on the map will then be coloured red or whatever shade is used for South African stations overseas.

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<sup>145</sup> The Dominions Office in Britain, who seemed relieved at the Union’s decision, organised that the Crown Agents give the expedition priority. Alec Clutterbuck to A.J.R van Rhijn, Union High Commissioner, 23 September 1959, TNA DO 35/104749.

<sup>146</sup> Secretary of Transport to Secretary of External Affairs, 19 November 1959, SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.2.

<sup>147</sup> “Memorandum oor Moontlike Deelname van Unie aan Antarktika Bedrywighede,” 26 June 1959, SAB BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.1.

<sup>148</sup> Note on informal interdepartmental discussion viz. collaboration with Norway on Antarctica, 3 September 1959, SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.1.

<sup>149</sup> Washington to Secretary for External Affairs, 29 September 1959, SAB BTS 102/7/2 vol.1.

<sup>150</sup> “SA Stakes Claim in the Antarctic: Weather Base to be Set Up,” *Rand Daily Mail* (23 September 1959); “Union’s ‘hush hush’ bid for Polar Base,” *The Star* (23 September 1959); “SA Claim in Antarctica: Louw Silent,” *The Star* (29 September 1959) in SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.1.

There is not much inflation of national pride to be got out of rising the Union flag at thus somewhat uninviting spot...[but] [b]y entrusting one of her possessions to South Africa, Norway is paying us the compliment of treating us as scientific equals – people who are capable of taking over a responsible assignment under exacting conditions...<sup>151</sup>

A more romantic version of the ‘exacting conditions’ was sketched by *Die Transvaler*, which referred to the dogs, the special clothes and food. They also mentioned that the base was self-sufficient and that the men applying should have ‘the right gears for the weather machine’.<sup>152</sup> In more ways than one, it would prove that South Africa was indeed part of the vigorous western races. When the Treaty Conference opened in Washington DC in October 1959, after sixty preparatory meetings, Erik Louw could announce that the South African government decided to ‘send a purely South African Scientific expedition to the mainland of Antarctica.’<sup>153</sup>

### ***The Antarctic Treaty Conference and its Reception in South Africa***

At first, it seemed that South Africa would have trouble even in having someone prominent lead their delegation, but at the last minute Louw’s diary was manipulated so that he could attend the conference at least on the first day as a figurehead.<sup>154</sup> Louw’s speech was yet another exercise in legitimising South African interest in the continent, the first port of call being geographical proximity (which was undisputable and a politically safe argument to make) and the fact that the distances were made even shorter by modern technology. He sought to provide a historical link between South Africa and Antarctica, going as far back as

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<sup>151</sup> Optimistically, it also pointed out that ‘a new weather base ought to be a most valuable acquisition. In a largely agricultural economy like our own, any sudden change in the weather can make all the difference between prosperity and hardship. That is why the importance of accurate long-term weather forecasts can hardly be overestimated.’ Editorial, “Maudheim,” *Rand Daily Mail* (25 September 1959) in SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.1.

<sup>152</sup> “Tien Uit S.A. Gaan Jaar in Yswêreld Bly,” *Die Transvaler* (9 October 1959), SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.1.

<sup>153</sup> Black people were, of course, not considered for the ‘pure South African’ expedition (nor for any other country’s expedition). Although four members of the Norwegian team stationed on Antarctica were willing to stay behind at the Union’s cost, the final team consisted only of South Africans. It was unclear from the documents whether this was a deliberate decision, but it was nevertheless politically exploited. Antarctic Conference Opening Address by the Hon. Erik H. Louw, Minister of External Affairs for the Union of South Africa at Washington DC, 15 October 1959, INCH PV4/53; Priority Telegram. South African Embassy in Washington DC to Secretary of External Affairs, 10 September 1959, BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.1.

<sup>154</sup> Wenzel du Plessis, Minister and Ambassador Plenipotentiary, took over from Louw as leader of the South African delegation. G.P Jooste to W.C du Plessis, Minister and Ambassador Plenipotentiary, Washington DC, 22 August 1959, BTS 102/2/7/1 vol.1. Before Mr Louw could attend, Schumann was suggested as he had some international standing as a scientist and was considered very knowledgeable about Antarctic matters. His position as deputy director of South Africa’s atomic energy board however, made him too sensitive politically. “On the Union Delegation to the Washington Conference,” August 1959, BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.1.

the commercial practices of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the pre-1947 attempts at Antarctic expeditions and all the token contributions made to Antarctic expeditions and institutions in the past. In terms of science, the focus was on geology and meteorology, two fields that were of obvious and direct importance to South Africa. The preparatory talks were reasonably thorough and a large number of issues were thrashed out to the concurrence of everyone involved.<sup>155</sup> The Treaty was signed on 1 December 1959, designating Antarctica as an international space ‘forever to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes...with the interests of science and the progress of all mankind.’<sup>156</sup>

Although the Treaty was signed before Harold McMillan’s ‘Wind of Change’ speech, the milieu of the Antarctic Treaty was one of decolonisation. There was the Mau-Mau rebellion of 1955 and both Ghana and Malaysia became independent in 1957. If not yet a gust, the breeze of nationalism was certainly noticeable in colonies around the world. Interestingly, it was the language of South Africa’s Apartheid policy mixed with colonisation that permeated South Africa’s press, especially the English papers. A *Star* article entitled ‘Far south of the Limpopo’,<sup>157</sup> referred to the conference on Antarctica as a ‘scramble for a slice of this vast, frosted cake.’<sup>158</sup> It foregrounded what it saw as the security implications in Antarctica: ‘We wish [Louw] luck, for we are in full agreement that the Union needs a “toehold” in these barren lands. And if our military strategists are worried about the implications, they ought to be able to find comfort in the fact that any territory we may acquire will be well south of the Limpopo.’<sup>159</sup> The significance of the reference to the Limpopo lay in South Africa’s main international relations issue at the time – what was happening north of the Limpopo, in Africa.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Laverde, “The Development, Pursuit and Maintenance of a South African Antarctic Policy,” 81.

<sup>156</sup> Preamble to Antarctic Treaty, available at [www.ats.aq](http://www.ats.aq) For the full text see Appendix A.

<sup>157</sup> “Far South of the Limpopo,” *The Star* (2 October 1959), SAB BTS 102/2/7/1 vol.1.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* These comments were made in a sarcastic, rather than laudatory, tone.

<sup>160</sup> Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Segregation, and Apartheid* (Malden: Historical Association Studies, Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 121.

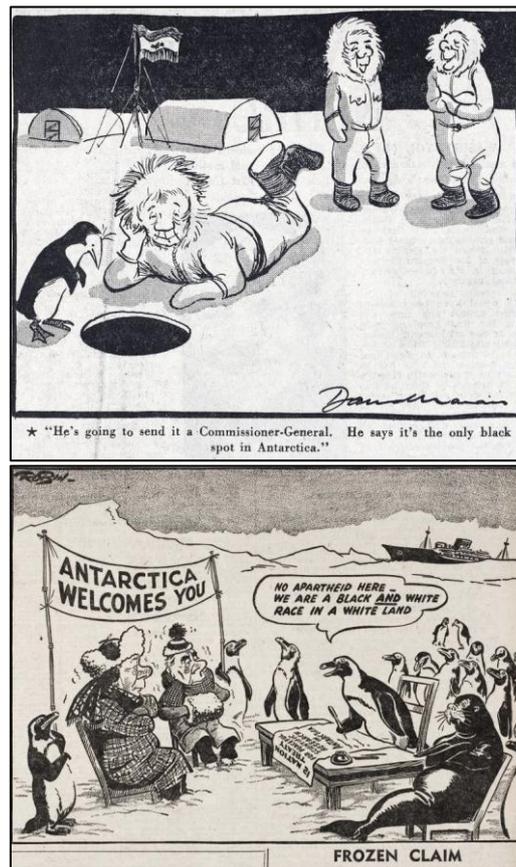


Figure 3.1: The White Continent with its black and white penguins made good cartoon material for commenting on South African race issues.

Sources: (top) *Cape Times* (1 December 1959); (bottom) *Natal Mercury* (3 December 1959)

Domestic issues remained, however, the preferred trope for commentary. One of the wittier illustrations of how the Treaty was used to illustrate a domestic point, was a *Cape Times* cartoon that showed a South African team member contemplating a hole in the ice, the caption reading: ‘He is going to send it a Commissioner-General. He says it is the only black spot in Antarctica.’<sup>161</sup> The ‘black spot’ was probably a reference to the Group Areas Act of 1951 that was vigorously implemented under the Verwoerd government.<sup>162</sup> Other (mainly English) cartoons could not resist the possibilities the White Continent with its black and white penguins had for incongruous commentary on racial issues, such as a *The Friend* cartoon depicting men in penguin suits and remarking that Antarctica is ‘a remarkable place for overcoming racial differences.’<sup>163</sup> In *The Natal Mercury* a ‘chief penguin’ informed two

<sup>161</sup> Cartoon in *Cape Times* (1 December 1959)

<sup>162</sup> Frank Welsh, *A History of South Africa* (London: Harper Collins, 2000), 446.

<sup>163</sup> Cartoon in *The Friend* (12 November 1959). At the time, racial differences also referred to different white groups, which was probably the meaning here.

white men that there was no Apartheid there, that ‘we are a black and white race in a white land.’<sup>164</sup>

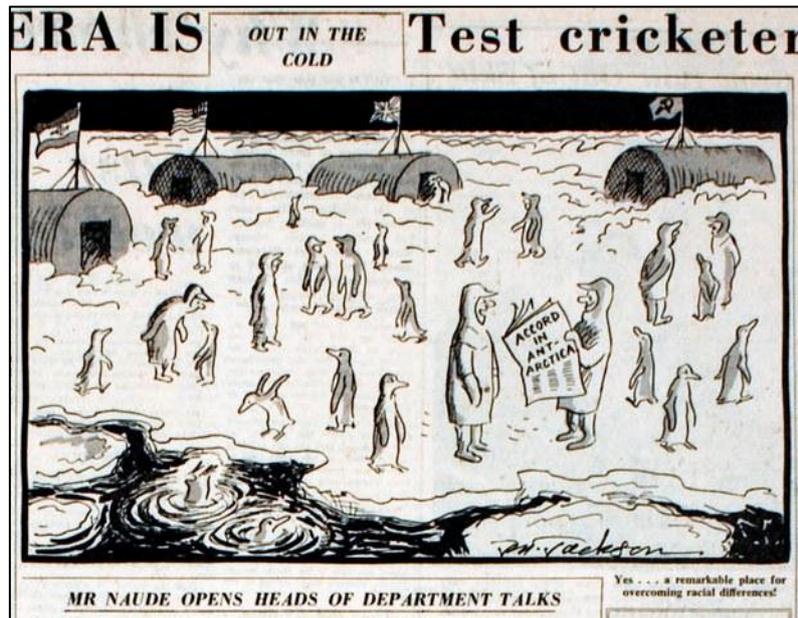


Figure 3.2: This cartoon took a more global view of race and Antarctica. It is captioned ‘Yes, a remarkable place for overcoming racial differences.’

Source: *The Friend* (11 November 1959)

Like in the 1930s,<sup>165</sup> the image of the ‘Scramble for Africa’ was used – an expression that possibly had particular resonance in South Africa.<sup>166</sup> The IGY had shown, however, that it was unlikely that exploitable resources would be found any time soon. In reference to the British ‘abandonment’ of another great desert, the Sahara, to the French, a *Star* editorial commented that ‘[i]t is of course unlikely that Antarctica hides under its ice all that the Sahara has been hiding under its sand.’<sup>167</sup> The editorial continued to focus on the ‘possibilities in the fields of strategy, politics, meteorology and commercial aviation’ and ended on a triumphal note, saying that whilst ‘we may never see the ripening fruits of our Antarctic policy, but our children certainly will.’<sup>168</sup> A *Natal Mercury* editorial was also positive about the Union’s partaking in the Treaty, saying that the Treaty was a ‘heartening first step in the realm of common sense and understanding and South Africans may take pride in the fact that the Union Government has been alive to its responsibilities by taking an active

<sup>164</sup> Cartoon in *The Natal Mercury* (3 December 1959).

<sup>165</sup> See chapter two.

<sup>166</sup> In the sense that South Africa should have partaken in it as ‘white’ country – not in reference to its own colonisation which occurred long before the Berlin Conference of 1884.

<sup>167</sup> Editorial, “A stake in the Antarctic,” *The Star* (29 January 1960).

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

part in negotiations and signing the pact.<sup>169</sup> That South Africa signed such a Treaty was seen as prestigious, a sign that South Africa was an internationally acknowledged western power.

*Die Transvaler* editorial also saw the Treaty as a significant achievement, a sign of how the human race progressed, and accumulatively gathering knowledge about the ‘earthly home he inhabits.’ In their assessment, the fact that the continent was uninhabitable yet valuable for science led to its being the ‘only part of the world not inculcated into international politics.’<sup>170</sup>

The broader implications of the Antarctic Treaty, especially with regards to the relationship between East and West and disarmament were also recorded. The *Natal Mercury* for instance wrote that diplomats had been heard to say that the Treaty was a ‘hopeful augury for East-West disarmament negotiations.’<sup>171</sup> Another editorial, in *Die Burger*, concluded that the Treaty was a sign that the Soviet Union was at least willing to accept the principle of international inspections, even if international inspections of Antarctic bases were still a far cry from international weapons inspections within the Soviet borders. Reflecting the ‘Rooi Gevaar’, (‘red’ or communist danger), it said that the main significance of the Treaty for South Africa was that it would be kept free of military bases, as it was within striking distance of South Africa.<sup>172</sup> The overwhelming number of references to the perceived Soviet threat in Antarctica tended to obscure the fact that, as Beck also pointed out, the Treaty was signed at a time when the relations between East and West had thawed a little. Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister had recently visited the USSR and Nikita Khrushchev visited the United States. The Treaty was also negotiated and signed (but not yet ratified) before the U-2 spy plane affair.<sup>173</sup>

The Treaty was however, very much a product of the Cold War. In South Africa, the references to the tumult to its northern borders and to the Scramble for Africa were more useful metaphors than deep ideological statements. The ideological substance beneath them were much rather one of South Africa wanting to align itself with the Western world in the face of the communist threat, which they feared will take over the countries to their north once the Europeans leave.

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<sup>169</sup> Editorial, “Peace in Antarctica,” *Natal Mercury* (3 December 1959).

<sup>170</sup> “Sake van die dag: Poolstreke kry meer betekenis,” *Die Transvaler* (16 October 1959) in SAB BTS 102/2/7/1 vol.2.

<sup>171</sup> Editorial, “Peace in Antarctica.”

<sup>172</sup> Redakteursbrief, “Antarktika,” *Die Burger* (3 Desember 1959).

<sup>173</sup> Beck, *International Politics of Antarctica*, 64.

## Conclusion

The period between the occupation of the Prince Edward Islands and the Commonwealth Expedition was characterised by mainly individual attempts at remaining involved, drawing on the personal experiences gained at the Prince Edward Islands. It was driven by the energy of individual scientists and bureaucrats (and hybrids of both), who realised that in the Cold War world; science could be a tool for diplomacy. It was, however, a tool that could be used by both scientists and diplomats. As Aant Elzinga pointed out, both the naïve view that science triumphed over politics, and the cynical view that it was ‘a matter of politics all the way’ are too extreme.<sup>174</sup> For South Africa, sending a scientist on the CTAE and participating in the IGY was a means of showing that South Africa had the necessary scientific capability to be recognised on a global scale. More importantly, it was a means of demonstrating where their allegiances lay in the Cold War context. When this did not prove enough to be fully included in the Antarctic Club and when it became clear that the Soviet Union was going to be a major member, the South Africans decided to make their presence more palpable, by sending a team to Antarctica to overwinter.

The ‘Scramble for Antarctica’ was a convenient allegory to use to visualise formally dressed men pouring over a map in an office, worlds removed from the area that map represents. It was, however, also a profoundly anachronistic allegory – not only was Antarctica and the Islands uninhabited, unlike Africa, but there was also little promise of even short term riches, a fact that crystallised as the ‘scientific onslaught’ on Antarctica intensified. As with Marion Island, the occupation of a base on Antarctica meant much more in its symbolism than it would actually have served to foil a highly unlikely plan that the Soviet Union might have had to install a missile launch pad. These events were part of larger demonstrations of power and prestige at the poles, displayed in a theatre that became accessible to increasingly more actors. It was an Antarctic manifestation of Cold War strategies of deterrence.

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<sup>174</sup> Aant Elzinga, “Origins and Limitations of the Antarctic Treaty,” P.A. Berkman, et al, eds, *Science Diplomacy*, 59.

## Chapter 4

# The most isolated continent and the pariah state, c.1961–1995

### Introduction

Contrary to what popular literature would have one believe, Antarctic history did not end in 1959, with scientists valiantly saving the great white continent from being corrupted by the politics of the other landmasses.<sup>1</sup> In the forty years preceding the Antarctic Treaty, South Africa's geographic, political and economic ties to British Empire played a major role in its relationship with the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic. In the 1950s, international relations had a strong East-West undercurrent. In South Africa, the upper echelons of the political and military establishment were paranoid about the communist threat and this filtered through to almost all levels of public life. On the ground, however, there was a level of scientific cooperation between and Soviet Union and South Africa, and at times, a willingness to cooperate logistically. The environment overrode human politics: the cooperation was necessitated by the severity of the Antarctic environment, and in the case of Bouvet, its extreme isolation.<sup>2</sup> In the 1960s the Imperial and Commonwealth ties that bound South Africa to Antarctica were severed. From the 1960s onwards one of the factors that kept South Africa involved with the Antarctic was that it could serve as an accessible proxy through which South Africans had access to the broader world, access that was increasingly being denied. In the first years after South Africa signed the Treaty and hurriedly despatched its first team to Antarctica, officials and scientists had to find a way of slotting Antarctica into existing institutions and acquire the infrastructure necessary to move South African presence in Antarctica beyond simply an *ad hoc* affair. The Prince Edward Islands, which fell outside the Treaty area, were included in this process for logistic reasons, but, as this chapter will show, also because they were increasingly seen as part of the Antarctic geography – in political and environmental terms. This chapter will argue that South African involvement as a non-claimant in Antarctica and as sovereign of the Prince Edward Islands was for a large part of

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<sup>1</sup> For example; Don Pinnock, *Blue Ice: Travels in Antarctica* (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2005); Marilyn Landis, *Antarctica: Exploring the Extreme: 400 Years of Adventure* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2001); David McGonigal, *Antarctica: The Complete Story* (London: Francis Lincoln, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Peder Roberts and Lize-Marié van der Watt, 'Bouvet Island and the Limits of Cold War Science,' *Exploring Ice and Snow in the Cold War* (Rachel Carson Centre, forthcoming).

the second half of the twentieth century also a history of South Africa's wider international relations.

Domestic fears and politics dictated the scene of South Africa's ratification of the Antarctic Treaty in June 1960, the second of the twelve signatories to do so. In February 1960, British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan delivered his 'Wind of Change' speech to the South African parliament. The speech indicated a clear shift in Britain's policy towards its African empire and Macmillan's intention to accept the 'political fact' of the rise of African independent 'national consciousness.' Britain and other European powers accelerated the process of decolonisation. Macmillan also revealed growing antipathy towards the apartheid policy, which received a stony reception from the South Africans.<sup>3</sup> The following month, what began as a non-violent protest against apartheid pass laws in a Vaal Triangle township, developed into a bloodbath when police shot into the crowd, killing sixty-nine African people – mostly in the back. The Sharpeville massacre, and the South African government's position that the victims were to blame, led to international condemnation.<sup>4</sup> In April 1960 both the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-African Congress (PAC), two of South Africa's most influential black political organizations, were banned. That same month, the United Nations General Assembly denounced apartheid and the Security Council became involved.<sup>5</sup> South Africa became a Republic on 31 May 1961. By the time the Antarctic Treaty came into force in July 1961, the two-month old Republic of South Africa had already left the Commonwealth. This chapter considers the generation following the establishment of the Republic to explore key reasons why the state continued and even intensified its involvement in Antarctica and the Islands in the period.

This periodization – from 1959 to 1991 – is useful in several ways. The Antarctic Treaty contained a clause that any party could ask for a review of the Treaty thirty years after it went into force (1991). It roughly corresponds with the intensification and end of both apartheid and the Cold War. And in 1991 the Treaty was not revoked, but instead the Treaty powers sought to further entrench their hegemony over the Antarctic with the Protocol on Environmental Protection.<sup>6</sup> Events during these three decades did not inexorably culminate in

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<sup>3</sup> Frank Welsh, *A History of South Africa* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), 454.

<sup>4</sup> Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: conquest, segregation, and apartheid* (Malden: Historical Association Studies, Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 128.

<sup>5</sup> R.E Bissell *Apartheid and International Organizations* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), 33–40.

<sup>6</sup> See Francisco Orrego Vicuña, "The effectiveness of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty" and "The legitimacy of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty,"

a kind of *pax Antarctica*, but were drawn into the world of politics and resisted it at the same time.

This chapter will first examine how the South African government tried to incorporate Antarctica into its existing structures, both logistically and ideologically. Secondly, the chapter will discuss South African involvement in the Antarctic resource debates, and how these were influenced by changing perceptions of the *function* of the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic environment. The chapter will consider South Africa's growing international isolation and how the state used its presence in Antarctic science to avoid being completely frozen out of a multilateral world. Lastly, an overview will be given of how the South African Antarctic Programme was taken beyond apartheid.

## **Antarctica, prestige and infrastructure c.1959–1963**

### ***Putting South Africa's stamp on Antarctica, c.1959 – c.1963***

Although South Africa managed to do enough not to be side-lined during the Treaty negotiations in Washington DC, they realised that they needed more than memoranda and diplomatic cables to secure their place in the Antarctic club. Arguably, the period of negotiations leading up to the Treaty served to expose the South African government officials to the political importance of Antarctica in the international sphere. The state also wanted to use the first South African Antarctic expedition locally – as another building block for the nation in the run-up to the break from the imperial metropole. This awareness was reflected in the media attention that the government deliberately cultivated. The departure of the first team to Antarctica was heavily chronicled in the media, both print and radio. Unlike the occupation of the Prince Edward Islands, there was a palpable nationalistic impulse in the way the team's journey was portrayed.<sup>7</sup> The government were careful to handpick the journalists allowed to accompany the team.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the only paper to report on it more critically was the liberal

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Olav Schram Stokke and Davor Vidas, eds, *Governing the Antarctic: The effectiveness and legitimacy of the Antarctic Treaty System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), chapters 7 and 11.

<sup>7</sup> The drowning of a Norwegian ship's steward when the ship was barely out of the harbour and the suicide of the second engineer (relayed to the public as an 'accidental death') added to the sense of adventure and tribulation.

<sup>8</sup> South African Information Service to Secretary of External Affairs, 13 October 1959 and 26 October 1959, SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.2. Keeping the publicity value in mind, the Post Office granted permission to Maarten du Preez to operate an amateur radio station at the base. Department of External Affairs to Post Master General, 21 November 1959, BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.2. Interview with Maarten du Preez, Pretoria (17 March 2010).

*Rand Daily Mail* which reported that the team consisted only of Afrikaans speakers, so it was ‘representative of only one section of the community.’<sup>9</sup>

The expedition was consciously organised to demonstrate that South Africa was capable of being in Antarctica, as shown in the previous chapter. Choosing white, Afrikaans-speaking men would have suited the prevailing narrative of Afrikaner nationalism, particularly one of white masculine power over the hostile land and ice.<sup>10</sup> Ironically enough, this myth – of men being capable of withstanding and even conquer hostile nature – was pandered to in a separate article in the same newspaper that criticised the expedition’s Afrikaans character.<sup>11</sup> The press gave a day-by-day account of the men’s adventures south. The South African state was literally determined to put their stamp on Antarctica and the prestige factor was also pursued through the paraphernalia of nationalism. Officials from External Affairs distributed stamps and first-day covers to the delegates at Washington DC.<sup>12</sup> The politics of colour was everywhere. A *Star* article speculated that some ‘might feel that a design in black and white would be appropriate to illustrate the awakened interest of the chief nation on the Black continent in the White one.’<sup>13</sup> The article suggested, however, that ‘we should get away from the black-white calculation of the chess board’ and that the stamp should rather be a reminder of the ‘cold detached scientific work’ being done in Antarctica.<sup>14</sup> The eventual stamp was an exercise in graphic geopolitics.

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<sup>9</sup> Given the time-period, this ‘community’ referred to white South Africans. Not even the *Rand Daily Mail* would have thought of pointing out that the expedition did not include a member of South Africa’s majority black population. Afrikaans was the *lingua franca* on the base and in communications, although four members were born in (northern) Europe, three in the Netherlands and one in Germany. Of these only Dick Bonnema, who received most of his education in the Netherlands, did not regard himself as South African. Interview with Dick Bonnema, Swellendam (5 August 2010).

<sup>10</sup> As demonstrated by an article that confirmed that South African men were indeed capable of surviving the cold. “Suid Afrikaners is bestand teen koue,” *Volksblad* (8 March 1958).

<sup>11</sup> ‘...swift changes to extreme cold, months of enforced isolation where no help can be expected from outside, and the deprivation of many of the amenities of civilisation. It will be a test of courage and perseverance from the South Africans.’ Anthony Paris, “No ‘S.O.S’ in Antarctic code,” *Rand Daily Mail* (3 December 1959) in SAB BTS 102/2/7/1 vol.2.

<sup>12</sup> Post-offices and their philatelic footprint were an integral part of Antarctic sovereignty politics, especially between Britain and Argentina who would have rival post offices on Antarctic Islands. This extended to radio licences, for example Australia that surreptitiously kept formally issuing the Russians with radio licences for Antarctica – the Russians stations being mostly located in Australian Antarctic Territory. Such were the markers of sovereignty in Antarctica. Klaus Dodds, *Pink Ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 38.

<sup>13</sup> “Springbok in furs,” *The Star* (20 October 1959) in SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 4.1: The commemorative stamp of the first South African National Antarctic Expedition. Note that 'South Africa' includes Namibia and the protectorates and the dotted line that linked nationalistically orange South Africa with the white continent.

*Source: Theo van Wijk at [www.antarcticlegacy.sun.ac.za](http://www.antarcticlegacy.sun.ac.za)*

A dotted line connected the Cape of Good Hope to where the South Africans would be stationed. It showed a projection of the globe on which both South Africa and Antarctica were prominent. Significantly, the 'South Africa' depicted included the British protectorates, South West Africa (Namibia) and Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). South Africa projected itself as more than just a regional power (for example South Africa refused to withdraw from Namibia although its mandate there had lapsed). Indeed, the state promoted an image of itself as naturally representative of southern Africa, especially in the international sphere. It was this South Africa that was staking a claim in the international Antarctica.<sup>15</sup> Tellingly, the government gave express permission to the team to raise the South African flag at the base and field camps.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> There is an ironic echo to this in post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa. A long awaited coffee table book on the Prince Edward Islands was subtitled Africa's Southern Islands (although they are South African only), ostensibly in the spirit of the African Renaissance but it is also reflective of South African neo-imperialism in Africa.

<sup>16</sup> Handwritten note Boet Malan to Pter H. Phillip, 11 August 1960. SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol. 4.



Figure 4.2: It is interesting to trace the importance and meaning of flag-raising on Antarctica over time. The top left-hand picture shows P S du Toit and J J la Grange in 1955 with the apartheid-era South African flag with the heading 'will fly at South Pole', indicating that they will be representative of South Africa in Antarctica, utilising it for a national goal. Next to that is a picture of Maarten du Preez, with the flag of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (the Boer republic of Transvaal), which he took to Antarctica in 1959. It was signed by all the team members. It was a more personal gesture, but the republican nostalgia contained therein was representative of a significant part of the more conservative Afrikaner nationalists. Bottom left is the first team picture where the flag was prominently displayed, not coincidentally it was also the last apartheid-era team. It was also during this time that the colours of the base became controversial, the orange, white and blue of the old flag. The colours were cast into the glass fibre by conservative elements within the Public Works department despite warnings that it would send the wrong political message. These were symbols of resisting change on the White Continent. The bottom right picture was taken in 2010. The scientists were posing with Red Bull they were sponsored. The flags were bought at a street corner. The South African flag became a consumer object.

Sources: *Die Transvaler* (December 1955), Dora Scott at [www.antarcticlegacy.sun.ac.za](http://www.antarcticlegacy.sun.ac.za); [www.sanap.ac.za](http://www.sanap.ac.za); Sarah Yates.

While consciously importing national symbols, naming existing structures was another form of expressing presence and ownership. There were efforts to rename ‘Norway Base’ SANAE (the acronym for South African National Antarctic Expedition) when it was formally taken over by the South African expedition.<sup>17</sup> When the South Africans moved out of the dilapidated Norway Base in the 1962 season, officials External Affairs wanted to use it as an opportunity to give a name that ‘stirs the imagination and is euphonious and expressive of our new venture to the South.’<sup>18</sup> They suggested *Spes Bona* (Good Hope) that ‘besides symbolising the Union’s hopes and in the wider sense the hopeful anticipation of scientific research and international cooperation.’<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the newly built polar vessel too was appropriated for the nationalist cause and named after the country itself, R.S.A., and the masts were painted in the orange, white and blue of the flag.



Figure 4.3: The R.S.A in Cape Town harbour. Note the colouring of the masts.

Source: Harm Moraal at [www.antarcticlegacy.sun.ac.za](http://www.antarcticlegacy.sun.ac.za)

<sup>17</sup> D.S Franklin, Union of South Africa Embassy in Washington, D.C to P.H Philip, Department of External Affairs, 30 October 1959, SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol. 2; D.S Franklin to P.H Philip, 2 August 1960 and handwritten note W M(alan) to PH Philip, 11 August 1960, Secretary for Transport to Secretary for External Affairs, 20 August 1960, BTS 102/2/7/2 vol. 4. The Norwegians were uncomfortable with this move. See Handwritten note W ‘Boet’ Malan to Peter H. Philip, 18 February 1961, BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.5. Internally, however, the South Africans continued to refer to SANAE and this continued to be its name (also see note 19 in this chapter). Sanae seems to be a popular Japanese name, making Google searches for SANAE rather laborious.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Philip to Boet Malan, 24 February 1961, SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. Philip also suggested that it be named after the president, provided his name is suitable for the purpose: ‘For example I would not recommend SWARTLAND which could hardly be more inappropriate and would be the subject of amusement and ridicule in the press.’ Despite it being on the SANCAR agenda and everyone agreeing that SANAE is not an appropriate name, ‘SANAE’ already passed into official discourse and convenience beat ideology.

The nationalist overtones were not restricted to paint, ink and cloth, but also manifested in the more paternal interventions of the state. Team members were warned by the Minister of Transport, Ben Schoeman, that ‘South Africa is watching them.’<sup>20</sup> Soon, South Africa was also controlling them. In 1962 parliament passed the South Africans in Antarctica Bill, making SANAE part of the magisterial district of the executive capital of Pretoria. Care was taken in working around potential Norwegian sensitivities with regards to sovereignty without actually recognising their claim. South Africa was not the first country to promulgate a law on jurisdiction in Antarctica, but it was the first non-claimant country to do so post-treaty.<sup>21</sup> Whilst its non-claimant status was already a technical legal problem, it was the implication that, apartheid ‘race laws’ could be applied to what was essentially Norwegian territory that proved controversial.<sup>22</sup> In reporting on the matter to the British Foreign Office, the British Embassy in Cape Town remarked that:

In our view, it would be wrong to read anything sinister into this action. Legislating for all conceivable possibilities, and generally stopping up legal loopholes and tying up legal loose ends, is a passion with the Afrikaner, and very probably the Bill simply originated in a discovery that, for example, a motoring fine could not be enforced on a person while serving with the South African expedition in Queen Maud Land.<sup>23</sup>

There was some truth to the idea that not having control over South African citizens in Antarctica was problematic for the government, as one (English-speaking) official remarked ‘there even seems to be a possibility that at present South African nationals in Antarctica are subject to no jurisdiction at all.’<sup>24</sup>

It was not, however, simply a bureaucratic matter. Contemporaries at the Department of Foreign Affairs noted that it would have been much more sensible to incorporate the citizens into the Cape Town magisterial region, as was the case with the Prince Edward Islands.<sup>25</sup> Control, however, lay with the centre of the state and that was Pretoria.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the

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<sup>20</sup> “Aflosspan na Suidpool: S.A se Oë is op Julle, Hoor Ekpedisie,” *Die Transvaler* (29 November 1960) in SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol. 4.

<sup>21</sup> W.C. Naude to Secretary of External Affairs, 23 December 1960, SAB BTS 102/2/7/1 vol.5.

<sup>22</sup> “Fear of Race Laws in Antarctic,” *Times*, 29 March 1962 in TNA FO 371/162042.

<sup>23</sup> Donald McGordon to D.F Lomax, 25 April 1962, TNA FO 371/162042.

<sup>24</sup> P.H Phillip, Department of External Affairs to Secretary of Transport, 7 January 1961, SAB BTS 102/2/7/1 vol.5.

<sup>25</sup> P.H Phillip to Secretary of Justice, 14 February 1962, SAB BTS 102/2/7/1 vol.5.

<sup>26</sup> The Department of Transport made the request ostensibly for ‘administrative reasons’, but as pointed out jurisdiction for the Prince Edward Islands was in Cape Town and their administration was done by the same

idea for the bill was first mooted in early 1961 as preparations for the establishment of South Africa as a Republic was underway, with its subsequent redefinition of citizen, one who do not recognise the British monarch as sovereign, but the president of a republican state, one in which Afrikaner nationalist ideals were fused with the functions of the state.

### ***The 1963 SCAR conference in Cape Town***

Another way of affirming the South African state's commitment to Antarctic science was by hosting international conferences. After the 1960 SCAR symposium in Cambridge, the South African representative, J J (Jan) Taljaard noted that South Africa was the only Southern Hemisphere country apart from Chile that had not hosted a SCAR conference or specialist group yet.<sup>27</sup> They proposed that South Africa venture to host the meeting at the latest in 1962/63. Pragmatically, the South African National Committee for Antarctic Research (SANCAR) also pointed out that the longer South Africa waited to host the SCAR meeting the more danger there would be of the attendance of non-white scientists – ‘apart from the Japanese.’<sup>28</sup> SCAR accepted the invitation for its biennial general meeting to be held in Cape Town in 1963 (SCAR VII), along with the meeting of its specialist symposium on geology. Geology was a discipline in which South Africans excelled, and it emphasised the symbolism of South Africa's historical and philosophic (through Aleksander du Toit) roots in Gondwana Land.<sup>29</sup> As it was, the upmarket Mount Nelson was the only hotel in Cape Town ‘that would take whites and non-whites.’<sup>30</sup> Realising the stature of the scientists who would be visiting and their potential influence back home, Foreign Affairs<sup>31</sup> arranged for the *per diem* of the South African scientists to be raised so they too could stay in the hotel as ‘closer personal ties are more likely to develop in such circumstances and this [is] important in the context of the

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individuals. Sekretaris vir Justisie aan Sekretaris van Buitelandse Sake, 27 February 1962, SAB BTS 102/2/7/1 vol. 5.

<sup>27</sup> “Enkele Opmerkings oor S.A.N.K.A.N se voorstel dat die volgende S.C.A.R vergadering in Suid-Afrika gehou moet word,” 24 March 1961, DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. It was also pointed out in a memorandum to the minister that non-whites, except for the Japanese, do not care much about Antarctica and that they were therefore relatively sure that they will not have to ‘deal with non-white representatives.’ “SCAR vergadering en die Geologiese Simposium, Kaapstad, September 1963, 23 January 1963, DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Arthur B Ford, “The Road to Gondwana via the Early SCAR Symposia,” Dieter Fütterer, *Antarctica: contributions to global earth sciences proceedings of the IX International Symposium of Antarctic Earth Sciences* (Potsdam, 2003), 3.

<sup>30</sup> Sekretaris van Vervoer to Sekretaris van Buitelandse Sake, 10 July 1963, DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol. 2 The race of the delegates was handwritten onto their visa applications.

<sup>31</sup> The department was renamed after the 1961.

efforts being made today to isolate South Africa.<sup>32</sup> International networks were important for scientific progress.

Initially, everything proceeded well for the conference organisers, and everyone accepted (even the Soviets made hotel bookings).<sup>33</sup> The Foreign Affairs and Transport Departments approached Treasury for extra funds to upgrade the formal conference dinner to a state dinner in the Castle of Good Hope, viewed as the first fort of white civilisation at the Cape, because ‘the privilege of hosting so many influential personalities in the Republic rarely occurs and it is essential that a good impression is made.’<sup>34</sup> Then, a month before the conference the USSR informed the SCAR secretary that they will be boycotting the meeting in light of the UN resolution calling for sanctions against apartheid South Africa and that they urgently request SCAR to consider moving the meeting.<sup>35</sup> The president of SCAR, G R (Georges) Laclavere, who orchestrated the ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ to put sovereignty issues aside for the duration of the IGY, found the Soviet attitude a disconcerting intrusion of politics in science. Laclavere replied that the UN resolution was inapplicable in this case and the suggested change impracticable. Moreover, it would ‘conflict with the spirit of...non-discrimination’ of the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), of which SCAR formed part. He urged them to send a representative to Cape Town ‘to maintain the flow [of] ideas between Antarctic scientists.’<sup>36</sup> The Soviets retorted that South Africa was hardly upholding the ICSU code of non-discrimination themselves.<sup>37</sup> Gordon Robin, SCAR secretary, also tried convincing South Africa to move the meeting from government buildings to university buildings, saying that ‘it will look much better if we are seen to be as independent of Government as possible.’<sup>38</sup>

The possibility that South Africa’s racial policies might interfere was foreseen by the SCAR executive and as an additional measure to uphold the sanctity of science, some of the letters between SCAR and the South African authorities passed verbally through the CSIR’s

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<sup>32</sup> Acting Secretary of Foreign Affairs to Secretary of the Treasury, 16 July 1963, DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol. 2.

<sup>33</sup> P.A Shuminsky, Vice Chairman, Soviet Committee on Antarctic Research to Eric Boden, Secretary of the South African Committee on Antarctic Research, 16 July 1963, DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Secretary of Transport to Secretary of the Treasury, 30 September 1963, DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol. 9.

<sup>35</sup> United Nations Resolution 1761 (XVII) of 1962.

<sup>36</sup> Copy of Telegram of Laclavere to Scherbakov, relayed on 2 September 1963, DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol.3.

<sup>37</sup> “Totstandkoming van SCAR vergadering, Kaapstad, September 1963,” DIRCO BTS 102/2/10 vol. 1: Annex A.

<sup>38</sup> Gordon Robin to Eric Boden, 30 August 1963, DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol. 2.

scientific liaison office in London to avoid the issue being on ICSU files.<sup>39</sup> South Africa, for its part, was ready to boycott the meeting themselves should it be moved.<sup>40</sup> Wary of creating a precedent that SCAR could be used as a conduit for political pressure, the meeting continued as planned in Cape Town, with only the Soviets absenting themselves.

The SCAR meetings consisted largely of coordinating scientific programmes, exchanging data, building on scientific collaborations and having stimulating conversations.<sup>41</sup> There was a genuine interest in the pursuit of knowledge among the scientists and it would be too extreme to describe the meeting as politics posturing as science.<sup>42</sup> There was, however, undeniable opportunity for the politics of prestige to surface. Politicians used these occasions to pass along viewpoints and warnings, in a thinly veiled manner. For example, South Africa's racial policies and the justification thereof were linked to the frontier trope in Antarctic research by Minister B J (Ben) Schoeman, who hosted the state dinner for the SCAR delegates. He said that he admired the men willing to go to the outposts, 'because it is not for money that they go there, but because they are rendering a service to their fellow human being – to enrich humankind's knowledge.'<sup>43</sup> He continued:

The South African nation also knows lonely places, because our forefathers were pioneers. Today South Africa is slandered by people who want us to relinquish our birth right. This is because we want to bring about an order of peaceful togetherness for all races in this country, to help those who have not yet reached this stage in their development and lead them to maturity.<sup>44</sup>

Thus Schoeman underlined two key political points: South Africa did not take kindly to those who criticised their domestic affairs and its scientific pursuits in Antarctica were further proof of their benevolent paternalist white supremacy.

### ***Scientific Moorings***

South African involvement in Antarctica and on the Islands was not only based on rhetoric and paperwork. It needed 'scientific activity' to legitimise its involvement. Unlike, for example, the South American countries, South Africa could not rely on a 'peaceful' military

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<sup>39</sup> J.A. King for the South African Scientific Liaison Office to Eric Boden (then head of the Science Cooperation Division), 12 December 1962, DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol.3.

<sup>40</sup> Marginalia to note 'SCAR Conference, Cape Town,' 30 August 1963, DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol.3.

<sup>41</sup> See Reports on Working Groups in DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol.2.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> "Ondersoek na SA weerstasie op Bouvet-eiland," *Die Volksblad* (26 September 1963) in INCH PV 22.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

presence in Antarctica or blue water Navy to carry the bulk of the logistic support. Scientists welcomed the opportunity to play an active role in creating the Antarctic presence, but were soon frustrated by budget constraints and a lack of bureaucratic understanding of what it took to conduct proper scientific research. By the early 1960s, as Saul Dubow demonstrated, the ‘ethos of scientific internationalism’ as cultivated by Smuts (expanded upon in chapters one and two), had ‘yielded to a much more insular technicism.’<sup>45</sup> Dubow also noted that it was not an abrupt change, but that there were underlying institutional continuities.<sup>46</sup> Organising an Antarctic scientific programme was logistically already an unwieldy affair without adding its explicit political currency and the emphasis on internationalism (albeit internationalism within the ‘Antarctic club.’) The departments involved were not the main targets for the National Party’s Afrikanerisation drive, and there was a balance between English and Afrikaans speakers.<sup>47</sup> The scientists involved, even those with strong personal political views like Theo Schumann, also saw the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic as spaces that broadened the scope for scientific research, and not simply as political objects of the nation state.<sup>48</sup>

The *Rand Daily Mail* article on the Afrikaner-heavy composition of the team referred to earlier also reported that the SANCAR was not consulted in appointing the team. According to the article, prominent (but anonymous) South African scientists criticised the expedition as insufficiently scientific – even going so far as to argue that ‘as presently constituted, it is not worth the expenditure involved.’<sup>49</sup> As was noted in the previous chapter, the organising committee did not have many qualms about putting science on the backburner. By the third and fourth expedition, however, more applications were made and universities had more time to scout for researchers and began to influence who was sent to Antarctica. South African scientists were keen to use the energy and the infrastructure created by South Africa’s participation in the Antarctic Treaty. As mentioned, the inclusion of the biologically interesting sub-Antarctic Islands in SCAR made it somewhat easier to channel state funds

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<sup>45</sup> Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa* (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2006), 252.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> For more on the apartheid era civil service see Deborah Posel, “Whiteness and Power in the South African Civil Service: Paradoxes of the Apartheid State,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 25, 1 (March 1999), 99–119, especially 104–105.

<sup>48</sup> This is particularly important to note in the case of T.E.W Schumann, who also held very strong political opinions. Amongst other things, he wrote a book entitled *The Abdication of White Man*; essentially a right-wing tract on white supremacy, one that was, however, not very unique for the time period during which it was published. T.E.W Schumann, *The Abdication of White Man* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1963).

<sup>49</sup> “Afrikaans Only in the Antarctic,” *Rand Daily Mail* (3 December 1959) in SAB BTS 102/2/7/1 vol.2. One of the team members, Victor von Brunn, eventually received his PhD in geology based on Antarctic work but there is little evidence that he planned on this before leaving for Antarctica.

towards research projects on the Islands. The scientists on SANCAR argued that Prince Edward Island in particular, ‘offers a paradise to biologists as it has never been inhabited by man and should also receive regular attention because of its striking differences to Marion Island.’<sup>50</sup> In addition to pointing out potential, the committee also indicated past achievements and contributions, including their possible applications. In their estimation, the most internationally valuable contribution was made in the upper-atmosphere physics research programme, as SANAE was conveniently located to study the South Atlantic Anomaly (a large deviation in the earth’s magnetic field). Understanding the ionosphere was vital for, amongst other things, radio communications, which in turn had strategic implications. Being at SANAE also gave scientists the opportunity to study observable phenomena such as airglow and aurora, something that would not be possible in South Africa.<sup>51</sup> Other scientific experiments and instruments such as the seismological station at SANAE were uniquely placed, being in such an isolated and vast environment. The seismological station was the only earthquake recording centre west of the Greenwich meridian up to the Antarctic Peninsula and was sensitive enough to record earthquakes in Alaska and (importantly) nuclear test explosions.<sup>52</sup>

Whilst both the government and the scientists involved with SANCAR agreed that South Africa should have a continuous presence in Antarctica, their reasons for this differed as well as their ideas of what ‘being there’ meant. The scientific committee, for instance, wanted scientific team members to be appointed for two to three years, one to be on Antarctica and gather data and the rest to process the data and publish it in international journals. To do adequate geological research in Antarctica air-support during the summer season was necessary or at least a second, inland base so that the geological team could start their research early in the austral summer. Similarly, for the Department of Transport, ‘running’ Antarctica and the Islands was an important and prestigious task receiving the attention of the Secretary himself. The Weather Bureau resorted under them, providing essential marine and aviation forecasts. Antarctic research programmes are unwieldy and costly to coordinate.

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<sup>50</sup> “Continuation of the South African Antarctic Research Programme after the Completion of the Present Five-Year Period,” undated (1965 or 1966), DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. It is not clear how a ‘valuable contribution’ was measured, but it did lead to a few degrees and collaborative papers. Also (Potchefstroom Group Interview, Potchefstroom, 4 October 2010).

<sup>52</sup> “Continuation of the South African Antarctic Research Programme after the Completion of the Present Five-Year Period,” undated (1965 or 1966), DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol. 2. There is still a seismological station at the current SANAE IV base on Vesleskarvet, Queen Maud Land, Antarctica. It is run in cooperation with the German Alfred Wegener Polar Institute and monitoring nuclear explosions is still part of its functions. Interview with Gerhard van Aswegen, Antarctica (5 January 2011).

Nothing on Antarctica, except knowledge, can be sourced locally. Team members had to be able to see to domestic tasks as well as their work. The programme also had to take into account the mandates and intentions of scientists, public works, foreign affairs and, at times, the military. Appointing someone for two years even though they spent only a year of it on the base was not an obvious option within a set, and usually strained, budget, but was necessary to make a sensible contribution.

As the initial five years of state funding came to an end, the scientific sub-committee of SANCAR wrote a memorandum to the government. They were aware that Antarctica was not a foreign policy priority and that the officials did not necessarily know much about the continent. They were, however, careful to not to step on the bureaucrats' toes and acknowledged that the policy decision on the continuation of South Africa's Antarctic programme 'will be largely influenced by factors falling outside its own field of competence.'<sup>53</sup> They proceeded to point out that the value science will have in foreign policy: 'scientific contributions...have earned South Africa its present position as an active and valued member of the "Antarctic Club."' <sup>54</sup> As such, they hoped that 'the international prestige to be derived from the not insignificant contribution which South African scientists are able to make to the scientific exploration of the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic regions will not be dismissed lightly.'<sup>55</sup> The scientific committee thus exploited the legitimising role science played in Antarctica and used it as a bargaining chip to ask the government for better funding. For their part, the reconnaissance of the Prince Edward Islands and the initial findings on Antarctica had opened new and unknown places for scientists to explore – for their own sake but also because of what it could add to knowledge about phenomena that they already studied in South Africa, for example the magnetic anomaly referred to earlier.

### ***Polar vessels and polar stations***

Commitment to an Antarctic programme also necessitated commitment to the infrastructure to uphold it. The 1959 suggestion by SANCAR that South Africa consider acquiring its own polar vessel was pursued with renewed urgency in 1960 as the Department of Transport struggled to find a vessel for the summer season following the first South African

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<sup>53</sup> "Continuation of the South African Antarctic Research Programme after the Completion of the Present Five-Year Period," undated (1965 or 1966), DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol. 2.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

expedition.<sup>56</sup> It was also suggested that potentially South Africa could collaborate with the Japanese, who passed through Cape Town on their way to Antarctica.<sup>57</sup> The wisdom of this was questioned by an official in External Affairs, who was worried that it might raise questions as to why Japan was not allowed full diplomatic representation in South Africa at a time when trade-negotiations were at a sensitive stage.<sup>58</sup> Although not explicitly stated, the supply of a new polar vessel was probably part of these trade negotiations<sup>59</sup> and Japan was awarded the contract to construct an ice-strengthened vessel for South Africa to be delivered by November 1961.<sup>60</sup> The fact that the vessel was not to be built in South Africa, but by Japan raised the eyebrows of United Party members, the official opposition to the National Party.<sup>61</sup> Opposition capital was made from this and it was taken as an insult to national industry, with the United Party insisting that South Africa has the skills and needed the investment.<sup>62</sup> Whether or not these assessments were true, South Africa consulted widely on buying a suitable vessel and lacking in maritime experience, the civil servants involved relied on input and advice especially from Britain.<sup>63</sup>

Another practical problem in ‘being in Antarctic’ that the South Africans faced was accommodation. ‘Norway station’ was built to last a year. The first South African team spent a lot of time making repairs and keeping the base habitable.<sup>64</sup> Under the weight of the ice the buildings were deteriorating rapidly and was declared unsafe, to be replaced at the latest by

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<sup>56</sup> Minutes of a Meeting of the Steering Committee of SANCAR, 3 June 1959, SAB BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.1; South African Ambassador in Belgium to Secretary of Transport, 3 June 1960; Secretary of External Affairs to South African High Commissioner in London, 7 June 1960 and Secretary of Transport to Secretary of External Affairs, 3 June 1960, SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.4.

<sup>57</sup> Secretary of Transport to Secretary of External Affairs, 3 June 1960, SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.4.

<sup>58</sup> Marginalia to Secretary of Transport to Secretary of External Affairs, 3 June 1960, SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol.4.

<sup>59</sup> The Department of External Affairs, including Minister Erik Louw, was in favour of establishing a post-War mission in Japan since at least since 1956, but Minister Verwoerd was reluctant. Persistent pressures from the private sector and the Department of Foreign Affairs led to South Africa establishing a mission in Tokyo in December 1962. The deals included ‘vast contracts for delivery of iron ore...[and] deals in shipping and the supply of wood chips.’ Pieter Wolfaardt, Tom Wheeler and Werner Scholtz, eds, *From Verwoerd to Mandela: Diplomats Remember vol. II* (Johannesburg: Crink, 2010), 186.

<sup>60</sup> Secretary of Transport to High Commissioner of the Union of South Africa, 19 December 1960, SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol. 4. The Department of External Affairs, including Minister Erik Louw, was in favour of establishing a mission in Japan since at least 1956, but Prime Minister Verwoerd was not convinced the ‘time the time is right.’ Wolfaardt et. al., eds, *From Verwoerd to Mandela*, 185.

<sup>61</sup> “Japan Kry Boukontrak: V.P. Skop Herrie Op oor Suidpoolskip,” *Die Transvaler* (10 March 1961).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Secretary of Transport to High Commissioner of the Union of South Africa, 19 December 1960, SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol. 4.

<sup>64</sup> Interviews with Chris de Weerd, Pretoria, 1 March 2010; Maarten du Preez, Pretoria, 17 March 2010; Theo van Wijk, Kempton Park, 20 March 2010.

the end of 1961 by a wholly new structure.<sup>65</sup> This meant salvaging some of the Norwegian equipment from an expected depth of some 20 feet beneath the snow. The challenge, however, was not in salvaging the (loaned) equipment, but in approaching the Norwegians about it, which ‘might raise the awkward question of sovereignty in Antarctica, a matter which had [been] studiously but successfully avoided...’<sup>66</sup> The South Africans considered the Norwegian decision to *lend* their base to the South Africans as a cunning way to give the ‘impression that the absence of Norwegian expeditions from Norwegian-claimed territory in Antarctica is only temporary.’<sup>67</sup> Yet, they wanted to avoid alienating the Norwegians by simply abandoning the station and the equipment and erecting a new base ‘on territory claimed by Norway’ without ‘advising them of our intentions.’<sup>68</sup> Specifically seeking Norway’s approval would have been taken as South African recognition of the Norwegian claim, which would depart from South Africa’s ‘previously adopted course of not committing ourselves one way or the other.’<sup>69</sup> This episode illustrated the fine line the South African authorities had to tread and their determination to persevere with their Antarctic presence for the foreseeable future by developing the necessary infrastructure. It was also illustrative of the unique relationship between South Africa and Norway in the multilateral Antarctic world, a pragmatic relationship uneasily maintained in the face of Norway’s disapproval of the apartheid government, which grew to outright condemnation from the mid-1960s onwards.

## **Resource Regimes: ‘Those Icy Wastes May Hide a Fortune,’ c.1970–1990<sup>70</sup>**

Security remained a major issue in South Africa’s involvement with the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic by the late 1960s. In addition to military security, the emphasis increasingly fell on resource security. The Antarctic Treaty, as Stokke memorably put it, ‘is no more than a whispering regime’ with regards to resources.<sup>71</sup> For many involved, it would have been preferable if the only potential resource in Antarctica and the Islands was mainly that of the

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<sup>65</sup> SANAE I was opened in 1962. South Africa replaced the base on the Fimbul Ice Shelf twice (again in 1971/1972 and 1978/79). SANAE IV was built inland and opened in 1996. It was still the South African base at the time of writing.

<sup>66</sup> Memorandum. “SANAE: Transfer of Base to new Site in Antarctica,” 9 February 1961, SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol. 5.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Title from Moshin Ali, “Those Icy Wastes May Hide a Fortune,” *The Citizen* (13 September 1977).

<sup>71</sup> Olav Schramm Stokke “The Effectiveness of CCAMLR” in Olav Schramm Stokke and Davor Vidas, eds, *Governing the Antarctic: The Effectiveness and legitimacy of the Antarctic Treaty System* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1996), 120.

abstract, scientific nature.<sup>72</sup> There were, however, resources south of the Prince Edward Islands that were of more political and practical importance to South Africa than science – marine animals, minerals and even ice itself.

Two important resource conventions were negotiated during the 1970s and the 1980s. The issues underpinning them were overlapping and influenced by negotiations of resource treaties elsewhere. Politically, the situation was similar to that of the Law of the Sea negotiations which were continuing at the UN: ‘inextricably entangled with Third World Politics, the Group of 77, the North-South conflict and calls for a new economic world order.’<sup>73</sup> The first convention discussed in this chapter is the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). Negotiations towards CCAMLR started in the mid-1970s, was signed in 1980 and entered into force in 1982.<sup>74</sup> This will be followed by a discussion of the Convention on the Regulation of the Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities (CRAMRA). Debates around minerals started to appear on the agenda the same time as CCAMLR, but the eventual convention was only adopted in 1988, and never went into force.<sup>75</sup> It was also during the negotiations of CRAMRA that the ATS, and South Africa’s participation in it, came under the global spotlight.

### **South Africa and marine living resources**

At the time of the Treaty discussions, the delegates were not ignorant of the resources issue, but it was side-lined in favour of finding a workable clause on the sovereignty issue, which would have been rather more difficult to agree on if potential minerals raised the stakes.<sup>76</sup> Further complicating matters was the need to keep the high seas, with its resources, out of the Antarctic Treaty. Maritime jurisdiction was already complex in Antarctica with sea-ice that effectively doubles the size of the continent in winter stretching definitions of ‘territory.’<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Peter Beck, *The International Politics of Antarctica* (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1986), 25.

<sup>73</sup> Stephen Pyne, *The Ice* (London: Phoenix, 2004), 370.

<sup>74</sup> This was preceded by the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals (CCAS) in 1972. For a summary of its legal history see Kees Bastmeijer, *The Antarctic Environmental Protocol and its Domestic Legal Implementation*, International Environmental Law and Policy Series, vol. 65 (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2003), chapter 2.

<sup>75</sup> The late 1980s saw a boom in Antarctic legal scholarship. For CRAMRA’s pre-adoption legal history see Francisco Orrego Vicuna *Antarctic Mineral Exploitation: The Emerging Legal Framework* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988).

<sup>76</sup> Beck, *The International Politics of Antarctica*, 174.

<sup>77</sup> For more on the Antarctic Treaty and the Law of the Sea, see for example C.C Joyner, *Antarctica and the Law of the Sea* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1988); F. Orrego Vicuna, “The Law of the Sea and the Antarctic Treaty System: New Approaches to Offshore Jurisdiction,” in C.C. Joyner and S.K. Chopra, eds, *The Antarctic Legal Regime* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1988); Gillian D. Triggs, “The Antarctic Treaty System: Some Jurisdictional Problems,” Gillian D. Triggs, ed, *The Antarctic Treaty Regime: Law,*

Moreover, the Treaty was negotiated as the first set of UN negotiations on the Law of the Sea was being signed in Geneva, and the high seas were explicitly ‘not prejudiced’ in the Treaty.<sup>78</sup> The regulation of the Southern Ocean was kept in ambiguity, at least for the first decade of the Treaty.<sup>79</sup> But, biologically, it was on the Southern Ocean that almost all the region’s higher trophic levels depended.<sup>80</sup> The Southern Ocean is ‘an extensive, unbroken and dynamic body of water’ that isolates the continent.<sup>81</sup> The Antarctic convergence is a biotic boundary, the mass of high seas surrounding the continent a geopolitical one. The interdependence of Antarctic ecosystems was known before the Treaty. Although it was not necessarily termed ecosystem studies, early scientific investigations like those ran by the *Discovery* were essentially studies of the complex ecological systems and sub-systems in the Southern Ocean. The key resource targeted by these studies was the whale. The exploitation of this resource was well known before the Treaty was signed, or at least that of whales and seals. In 1946, the regulation of whaling was internationalised by the Whaling Convention and the creation of the International Whaling Commission. South Africa did not adhere to it closely but by 1960 the whaling industry in South Africa had ebbed. South Africa was also part of the sealing industry on the sub-Antarctic islands, but their involvement had already reached its zenith in the previous century.<sup>82</sup> By the time South Africa sent expedition teams south, seals were essentially used as dog food.<sup>83</sup>

During the 1950s, Antarctica and the Islands still were seen very much as places that needed ‘development’.<sup>84</sup> The IGY and the Treaty focussed on forbidding military activities and encouraging scientific activities, without giving any definition of the latter other than it should be in the spirit of the IGY. The natural environment of Antarctica was inscribed in the Treaty

*Environment and Resources* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Alfred van der Essen “The Application of the Law of the Sea to the Antarctic Continent,” Francisco Orrego Vicuna, ed, *Antarctic Resources Policy: Scientific, Legal and Political Issues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>78</sup> The Treaty Area was defined by 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 rights, of any State under international law with regard to the high seas within that area.’ The first UN conventions with regards to the sea were signed in 1958.

<sup>79</sup> Davor Vidas “The ATS and the Law of the Sea” Stokke and Vidas, eds, *Governing the Antarctic*, 62.

<sup>80</sup> Denzil G.M Miller, “Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources: A Review and South African perspective,” *South African Journal of Antarctic Research* 21, 2 (1991), 130.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> For an exploration of this see Thierry J.M Rousset “‘Might is Right’. A Study of the Cape Town/Crozets elephant seal oil trade (1832-1869),” (MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, Cape Town 2011).

<sup>83</sup> Interviews with Maarten du Preez, Pretoria (17 March 2010); Theo van Wijk, Kempton Park (20 March 2010). Although some teams attempted seal steak on both the islands and Antarctica, they found it unpalatable.

<sup>84</sup> G.E Fogg, *A History of Antarctic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 180. Also see chapter five in this dissertation.

with one very short sentence that does not contain the words nature or environment. Article IX determines that the Treaty parties shall consult regularly on a variety of issues, including (f) ‘the preservation and conservation of living resources in Antarctica.’<sup>85</sup> During the first consultative meeting Treaty parties decided that some measure of control over the environment was necessary. In 1964 the Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Flora and Fauna was tabled. Regarding these measures, Stokke remarked on the reluctance displayed by the Treaty parties to actually manage, as opposed to preserve, the Antarctic resources.<sup>86</sup> South African scientists, who had recently essayed a reconnaissance to investigate the possibilities for scientific research on the Prince Edward Islands, suggested the measures be adopted for the islands as well, especially on the smaller Prince Edward Island.<sup>87</sup> The latter was seen as ‘a true untouched treasure of nature which deserves the most stringent protection.’<sup>88</sup> There was definite scientific value in such ‘extremely rare’ islands that ‘harbour a wealth of plant- and animal life in such an interesting ecological setting.’<sup>89</sup> Seen in this context, the non-exploitation of the one resource served to protect another – that of ‘sound scientific principles.’<sup>90</sup> Scientists were aware that ‘the Antarctic must not be regarded as a pristine region unmodified by man: its ecosystems have been widely influenced by past human impacts.’<sup>91</sup> It was in their interest to carefully control and prevent further impacts on these islands and Antarctica, in order to retain an interesting ecological setting. The setting was interesting exactly because of the relative lack of direct human impact – it could be appropriate, in a way, a global control experiment but for that to remain the case the environmental parameters had to be carefully measured and as far as possible controlled.

But scientists were not the sole stakeholders in the Antarctic industry. For the previous couple of centuries the Antarctic economy ran on blubber and pelts and in 1972 the *Polarhav* went on an experimental sealing voyage to some of the Antarctic islands. Fearing the ecological and political consequences if sealing was to be revived, the Antarctic Treaty parties

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<sup>85</sup> Antarctic Treaty Article IX (f)

<sup>86</sup> Olav Schramm Stokke, “The Effectiveness of CCAMLR,” Stokke and Vidas, eds, *Governing the Antarctic*, 121.

<sup>87</sup> South Africa was one of the first countries to adopt the measures. “Report on the Working Group on Biology, Cambridge, England, July/August 1968,” DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol. 3.

<sup>88</sup> E.M van Zinderen Bakker, “The South African Biological-Geological Expedition to the Marion and Prince Edward Islands” Annexed to “Report on the Working Group on Biology, Cambridge, England, (July/August 1968),” DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol. 3.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> M.W. Holdgate, “Environmental Factors in the Development of Antarctica,” Vicuna, ed, *Antarctic Resources Policy: Scientific, Legal and Political Issues*, 82.

negotiated the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals (CCAS). The CCAS aimed at regulating commercial sealing and banning the killing of some species.<sup>92</sup> There was, however, little commercial value left in sealing. Countries started investigating a rather different marine living resource. Krill, especially *Euphausia superba* is a so-called ‘keystone organism’ of the Southern Ocean ecosystem, playing a pivotal role in the conversion of plant biomass to animal biomass.<sup>93</sup> Commercial exploitation of krill started in the late 1960s by the USSR and gathered momentum in the 1970s.<sup>94</sup> The increased harvesting of krill, together with the stimulus provided by United Nations Law of the Sea conferences that was investigating an international regime for the high seas and deep seabed (with implications for fisheries and mining) prompted the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties<sup>95</sup> to examine marine living resources.<sup>96</sup> Any international agreement that took krill into account suffered from a lack of reliable quantitative data on the size and structure of krill populations. The impact of the depleted but increasing whale stock needed to be taken into account (would less whales necessarily mean less krill? What other checks and balances were there?).<sup>97</sup> Krill also had patchy distribution and swarming habits.<sup>98</sup> The fact that knowledge was scanty and the commercial value not firmly established was not seen as a hindrance, indeed, whaling conventions showed that the management of resources became decidedly more difficult once they have been proven to be commercially successful and industries around them have been established.<sup>99</sup> Unlike mineral resources, an issue that was raised more or less at the same time, krill was already being exploited, whereas the exploitation of minerals was not even a short term reality.<sup>100</sup>

The strategic importance of marine resources in the south-west Atlantic and south-east Indian oceans grew, along with the ‘total onslaught’ paranoia of Defence (later Prime) Minister P.W.

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<sup>92</sup> Brian B. Roberts, “Conservation in the Antarctic,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 279, 936 (26 May 1977), 100.

<sup>93</sup> George A. Knox “The Living Resources of the Southern Ocean,” Vicuna, ed, *Antarctic Resources Policy*, 48.

<sup>94</sup> Denzil G. Miller, “Commercial krill fisheries in the Antarctic, 1973-1988,” Selected Scientific Papers (SC-CAMMLR-SSP/6, 1989).

<sup>95</sup> By 1975 Poland (1961), Czechoslovakia (1962), Denmark (1965), the Netherlands (1965), Romania (1971), East Germany (1974) and Brazil (1975) acceded to the Treaty, but at the time none of them had consultative status, and as such were observers excluded from decision making.

<sup>96</sup> Miller, “Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources,” 135.

<sup>97</sup> Beck, *The International Politics of Antarctica*, 215

<sup>98</sup> Fogg, *A History of Antarctic Science*, 222.

<sup>99</sup> M.W. Holdgate, “Environmental Factors in the Development of Antarctica,” 78.

<sup>100</sup> Egil Bersager, “Basic conditions for the exploration and exploitation of mineral resources in Antarctica: options and precedents,” Vicuna, ed, *Antarctic Resources Policy: Scientific, Legal and Political Issues*, 167.

Botha.<sup>101</sup> P.W. Botha was convinced that South Africa was under attack from the Soviet communists – via their African agents. He saw South Africa as the bastion against communism in Africa.<sup>102</sup> Memoranda on South Africa, the sub-Antarctic and the Antarctic increasingly used the expression of South Africa being a ‘littoral’ and ‘frontline’ state, the latter a term directly associated with the ‘total onslaught’ rhetoric.<sup>103</sup> Geographically, the space referred to in this context was inclusive of the Prince Edward Islands, Bouvet, Antarctica and the seas in between: a vast uninhabited and largely still unknown space. Klaus Dodds had made the argument that the demarcation of the south Atlantic as a discrete zone ‘encoded the region as a site of possibilities.’<sup>104</sup> For South Africa, this region was arguably extended to the Prince Edward Islands as part of South Africa’s frontier. The relative ignorance about the region, along with the vast and isolated nature thereof, enabled actions such as illegal fishing and references to real and imagined threats of the Soviet blue water navy controlling the shipping lanes (whether or not they actually passed that far south). In 1977, the Department of Transport, in consultation with other government departments, decided to put special emphasis on the promotion of research into marine living resources and actively encouraged international cooperation in this regard.<sup>105</sup> To be able to exploit Antarctic marine sources, they needed to understand what was there.

Although South Africa did not harvest krill commercially, they had definite interests in the management of maritime sources, and the health of the krill population had a direct impact on the broader marine ecosystem.<sup>106</sup> South African scientists were closely involved with the Biological Investigation of Marine Antarctic Systems and Stocks (BIOMASS).<sup>107</sup> Its principle objective was: ‘to gain a deeper understanding of the structure and dynamic functioning of the

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<sup>101</sup> For more on the geopolitics of South Africa and the south Atlantic in the 1970s see Klaus Dodds, “Creating a Strategic Crisis out of a Communist Drama? Argentine and the South African Geo-Graphs of the South Atlantic,” *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinamericanos y del Caribe/European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 56 (June 1994), 33-54.

<sup>102</sup> South Africa’s anti-communist and anti-Soviet fears were strongly linked to decolonization in Southern Africa, and Soviet support for Angola and importantly also the African National Congress (ANC), South Africa’s most important liberation movement in exile. See Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), especially chapter 6.

<sup>103</sup> As contained in DIRCO, BTS series 102/2/7 volumes 25-30.

<sup>104</sup> Dodds, “Creating a Strategic Crisis out of a Communist Drama?” 40.

<sup>105</sup> A.B. Eksteen, Secretary of Transport to Secretary of Foreign Affairs ‘Suid-Afrikaanse Antarktiese Bedrywigehede’ (5 August 1977), DIRCO BTS 102/2/7 vol. 21.

<sup>106</sup> Personal correspondence with Denzil Miller (3 September 2011). He did an industrial scoping project for the Industrial Development Commission on the Possibility of a South African based krill fishery.

<sup>107</sup> The link between BIOMASS and the ATS in South Africa was reflected by, amongst other things, the CSIR moving the Southern Ocean Programme from the South African National Committee for Oceanographic (SANCOR) Research to the South African Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research (SASCAR), then the CSIR committee responsible for scientific advice on Antarctic research (1983).

Antarctic marine ecosystem as a basis for the future management of potential living resources.<sup>108</sup> BIOMASS was a major international research programme, mainly under the auspices of SCAR and the Special Committee for Oceanic Research (SCOR). Twelve countries participated.<sup>109</sup> Several multi-ship voyages were undertaken.<sup>110</sup> The BIOMASS experiment was a good example of South Africa's scientists operating on an equal footing with countries with which it had limited or no formal ties.<sup>111</sup> Through taking an ecosystem approach, the BIOMASS experiments did not narrowly focus on exploitable fish only, but included for example ornithological studies. It gave a broad range of South African scientists the opportunity to partake in research on an international platform. International collaborations were becoming increasingly difficult also for South African scientists.

Conservation, in terms of conventions such as the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), meant 'the management of renewable natural resources for optimum sustainable yield.'<sup>112</sup> The CCAMLR negotiations started in 1977 but were proceeding slowly as countries fought to control proceedings through administrative procedures. One of the major issues were the sovereignty of sub-Antarctic exclusive economic zones. The outer limit of CCAMLR was the Antarctic Convergence, major biotic boundary.<sup>113</sup> South of this line though, were French, South African and Australian Islands. The French pushed for their territory to be respected by the convention.

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<sup>108</sup> D.L. Powell, "Scientific and Economic Considerations Relating to the Conservation of Marine Living Resources in Antarctica," Vicuna, ed, *Antarctic Resources Policy*, 113.

<sup>109</sup> Sayed Z. El-Sayed, ed, *Southern Ocean Ecology: The Biomass Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 13.

<sup>110</sup> The departments involved continued to invest in the infrastructure to support a scientific programme. A new polar vessel, the *SA Agulhas*, which was also constructed in Japan arrived in South Africa in 1978, just in time for the BIOMASS experiments. The RSA was not a great success. It had insufficient accommodation and cargo space for an Antarctic supply vessel and was too small for a flight deck capable of handling two helicopters, which South Africa needed if it was to fulfil the Weather Bureau's dream of a station on Bouvet Island. Already in 1969 South Africa began enquiring after another vessel but only had sufficient funds in the 1970s to build the *SA Agulhas*. Described as more 'Windsor Castle than Antarctic survey', her maiden voyage to Gough Island was marred by a murder, the first of two. Legend has it that the fire axe used in the first murder is the same one that still hangs in the upper passenger deck. She had a much longer run as an Antarctic supply vessel (44 years) than the *RSA*, and is due for retirement in April 2012. A new polar vessel is being constructed in Finland.

<sup>111</sup> The first multi-ship experiment was called FIBEX (First International Biomass Experiment) and the second, SIBEX (Second International Biomass Experiment) was divided into SIBEX I and II. South African vessels that partook included the *S.A.S Protea* (10 February – 12 April 1978); the *M.V. Agulhas* (pre-FIBEX, 28 February – 2 April 1980; FIBEX, 16 February – 10 March 1981; SIBEX I 24 March – 26 April 1984) and the *R.S Africanana* (SIBEX II, 20 February – 23 March 1985). D.G.M Miller, ed, "SIBEX II: Report of the South African study in the sector (48° - 64°e) of the Southern Ocean," *South African National Scientific Programmes Report*, 132 (Pretoria: CSIR, 1986), iii.

<sup>112</sup> Holdgate, "Environmental Factors in the Development of Antarctica," 77.

<sup>113</sup> Beck, *The International Politics of Antarctica*, 213.

South Africa, who wanted to operate under the radar and not draw too much attention to its involvement, was pleased that – at least implicitly – their sovereignty was acknowledged.<sup>114</sup>

CCAMLR was signed in 1980 and ratified in 1982. The Department of Foreign Affairs entreated departments involved with scientific-environmental treaties to remain active participants to these treaties. Carl von Hirschberg, South Africa's Consul-General in Tokyo overseeing CCAMLR diplomacy, wrote he 'was strongly in favour of South Africa's participation in work of this nature as it was one where we could still operate freely on the international arena and could show the quality of scientific work we are capable of. Even purely scientific bodies are now being closed to us.'<sup>115</sup> Treaties and institutions such as the International Whaling Commission,<sup>116</sup> CCAMLR and other ATS related activities included the national and territorial, but could by their very nature not be bound to it. Excluding South Africa, would also be excluding a port from which many fishing vessels operated. It should therefore not be surprising that a number of these multilateral bodies presided over marine resources.<sup>117</sup> When the Director-General of the Department of Foreign Affairs asked whether CCAMLR should not rather be signed by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, who would be the department responsible for implementing the CCAMLR measures, Tom Wheeler, the diplomat who represented South Africa summed up South Africa's position thus: 'CCAMLR should never be considered a normal Fisheries Convention...because of the many legal and political issues involved.'<sup>118</sup> With CCAMLR signed and ratified, the focus turned to the other major resource issue: minerals.

### ***Return to Gondwana land: South Africa and CRAMRA***

ATCPs (Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties) first expressed interest in Antarctic minerals in 1970. In 1972 the press reported that the *Glomar Challenger* found methane, ethane and

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<sup>114</sup> DF Laubscher to HH van Niekerk, 7 March 1980, BTS 102/2/11 vol. 1.

<sup>115</sup> "Note for the File: South African Participation in FIBEX, need for an additional ship," undated, attached to BTS 102/2/11 vol.1:

<sup>116</sup> In 1982, when a moratorium on whaling was imminent, South Africa's Sea Fisheries wanted to withdraw from the International Whaling Commission (IWC) as Sea Fisheries was a proponent of 'sustainable use of resources.' Foreign Minister Pik Botha personally appealed to his colleague in the Department of Industries, who had political responsibility for Sea Fisheries, to not withdraw from the IWC and isolate South Africa. Tom Wheeler, personal communication (31 August 2011) and Wolfaardt et al, *From Verwoerd to Mandela*, 247.

<sup>117</sup> E.g. CCAMLR, IWC, International Commission on South-East Atlantic Fisheries (ICSEAF) (until 1990, when upon independence Namibia refused to join it) and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). Through these technical commissions South Africa had access to important UN bodies like the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). P. Wolfaardt et al, *From Verwoerd to Mandela*, 246.

<sup>118</sup> Thomas Wheeler to Carl von Hirschberg, 4 August 1980, BTS 102/2/11 vol. 1.

thermogenic hydrocarbons on the Antarctic coast.<sup>119</sup> In the northern summer of 1973, an international group of experts met for an academic discussion on Antarctic resources at the Fridtjof Nansen Institute in Norway. Antarctica had never been a foreign policy priority and South Africa's delegate at the meeting lamented afterwards:

Discussions like these are however never academic and I would strongly urge that we don't attend occasions like these without a policy even if it is never presented as such...the function of international law is to reconcile national interests and if you don't know what they are there is nothing to reconcile. As Ambassador Hambro [of Norway] remarked, the law achieves what you want it to achieve, that is what it is there for.<sup>120</sup>

The conference, along with the 1973 international oil crisis,<sup>121</sup> jolted the South Africans into action. In a memorandum on the Oslo meeting, the Department of Planning and the Environment reported extensively on South Africa's options for a minerals policy. According to the memorandum, it would make little sense for South Africa to support mining in Antarctica – apart from the fact that operational costs would be prohibitive, many of the minerals were likely to be similar to those found in South Africa, which could 'lead to increased competition on world markets.'<sup>122</sup> The extraction of fossil fuels, notably oil, could however provide greater security, especially in the light of 'the present political position in the Middle East and the policies of OPEC'<sup>123</sup> Politically, the memorandum explained, it might be better to rather try and restrict membership to any minerals regime, to preserve veto rights and obtain 'guarantees that the marketing of minerals will not adversely affect world markets.'<sup>124</sup> At a later interdepartmental meeting Brand Fourie, Secretary of Foreign Affairs who also had considerable experience at the UN (mostly observing), remarked that nothing

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<sup>119</sup> D.W.H Walton and C.S.M. Doake *Antarctic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 184. At the time, scientific consensus was against the feasibility of Antarctic mining and drilling. For more on the known mineral resource potential of Antarctica at the time, including the differences between mineral occurrences, mineral deposits, economic deposits, and mineral reserves see Robert Willan, David Macdonald and David Drewry, "The mineral resource potential of Antarctica: geological realities," Graham Cook, ed, *The Future of Antarctica: Exploitation versus Preservation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 25–43.

<sup>120</sup> A. du P. Louw, "Nansen Foundation Meeting on Antarctic Resources, Oslo May 30 – June 8, 1973," 20 July 1973, DIRCO BTS 102/2/10 vol.1.

<sup>121</sup> The oil crisis was precipitated by the Yom Kippur war. The Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) proclaimed an oil embargo on sales to the United States and other pro-Israel nations. It also cut production by 25 per cent. Judith Anne Rees, *Natural Resources: Allocation, Economics, and Policy*. (London: Methuen & Co, 1985), 164.

<sup>122</sup> Department of Planning and the Environment Memorandum: Meeting of Antarctic Resources, Fridtjof Nansen Foundation. Signed by W.L van Rensburg, 4 June 1973, DIRCO BTS 102/2/10 vol.1.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

would in any case stand in the way of Japan and the USA if they thought there was marketable oil in Antarctica. He quipped that ‘if the USA first staked their claims in Antarctica, and it is a matter as important as oil, they would tell the UN to go jump in the lake.’<sup>125</sup>

Fourie was of the opinion that it would be in South Africa’s best interest to keep Antarctica free of mineral exploration and exploitation because ‘the risk of pollution is very big and could have a catastrophic effect on the marine living resources in South African waters.’<sup>126</sup> Politically and economically, he continued, it could have a negative impact on South Africa’s position as an important supplier of minerals.<sup>127</sup> Nevertheless, he also noted that whilst a moratorium would be the ideal short-term solution, the pressure to allow mining might become such that it would serve South African interests better to come to an agreement amongst the Treaty parties before it is thrown open to international participation, in which case South Africa would probably be excluded.<sup>128</sup> His final recommendation was that South Africa do not make any formal proposals, because the ‘current vehement opposition to South Africa in the international arena would inevitably mean that even the most innocent and acceptable modus that we introduce will be wrecked.’<sup>129</sup> Keeping the UN out of Antarctica was actually in the interest of most of the Antarctic Treaty Parties.<sup>130</sup> South Africa, whose relationship with the UN was already at breaking point, would have to act before ‘developing countries get on the trail and involve the UN,’ which would leave them ‘at the mercy of the Afro-Asian bloc.’<sup>131</sup> The ATCPs formally put the issue of mineral exploitation on the ATCM

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<sup>125</sup> ‘sal hulle vir die VV sê om te gaan doppies blaas.’ “Minerale Ontginning in Antarktika: Bepaling van ‘n Suid-Afrikaanse Beleid,” 25 October 1973, DIRCO BTS 102/2/10 vol.1.

<sup>126</sup> Secretary of Foreign Affairs to Secretary of Transport, “Antarktika,” August 1977, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7 vol. 21.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Mostly because they did not want to relinquish sovereignty and the potential future economic benefits that Antarctica might yield. At the time, of course, with ‘scientific data’ not something easily quantified, Antarctica and the Islands in the SCAR area of interest could hardly be seen as profitable or even self-sustaining ventures. Budgets were big with little immediate and tangible results. Not all the countries were dead-set against an international regime without sovereignty either. It was well-known that the government of New Zealand was not averse to the idea of declaring Antarctica a World Park. In the 1950s their Prime Minister, Walter Nash, already mooted the idea. It was nevertheless their representative, Charles Beeby, that was responsible for drawing up the first workable draft proposal for a minerals regime in Antarctica, the so-called Beeby-drafts.

<sup>131</sup> “Minerale Ontginning in Antarktika: Bepaling van ‘n Suid-Afrikaanse Beleid,” 25 October 1973, DIRCO BTS 102/2/10 vol.1.

(Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings) agenda in 1975.<sup>132</sup> This would emphasise another element in South Africa's involvement with Antarctica –potential economic value.

Brand Fourie wrote to his colleague in Transport, A.B Eksteen that a new era had dawned. The interest in the economic exploitation of Antarctica broadened the field of South African interest on economic, strategic and political level.<sup>133</sup> With South Africa's membership of the International Oceanographic Committee unsure, the Antarctic Treaty was 'the only international group where South Africa could protect its interests in the Southern Ocean.'<sup>134</sup> He argued that the increasing prominence of these issues, with far-reaching political consequences necessitated the more active participation of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Antarctic meetings. He also suggested involving the Department of Mining and Industries.<sup>135</sup> With regards to funding, he expressed what he saw as the relationship between science funding and the Antarctic in unambiguous terms: 'it is simply so that if we do not have a meaningful programme we lose the platform and entry that the Antarctic Treaty provides us to look after South Africa's interests – in Antarctica as well as in the southern ocean.'<sup>136</sup>

By early 1983, the first draft regime was tabled. South Africa's policy was to side with the western nations<sup>137</sup> (although they often found themselves privately agreeing with the Soviet bloc).<sup>138</sup> The South African delegation also recommended that the CSIR start to fund more seismic projects in Antarctica in the light of the negotiations.<sup>139</sup> In 1988 the ATCPs agreed to an Antarctic Minerals Agreement.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Christopher C. Joyner, "The Effectiveness of CRAMRA," Stokke and Vidas, eds, *Governing the Antarctic*, 48.

<sup>133</sup> Secretary of Foreign Affairs to Secretary of Transport, "Antarktika," August 1977, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7 vol.21

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs: Report of the South African Delegation to the Sixth Meeting on Antarctic Mineral Resources, 28 March 1985, DIRCO BTS 102/2/10 vol.7.

<sup>138</sup> Wolfaardt et al. *From Verwoerd to Mandela*, 246.

<sup>139</sup> A.O van der Westhuyzen (CSIR representative), "Report," March 1985; Department of Foreign Affairs: Report of the South African Delegation to the Sixth Meeting on Antarctic Mineral Resources, 28 March 1985, DIRCO BTS 102/2/10 vol.7.

<sup>140</sup> For a technical discussion of the negotiations and the convention see C.C. Joyner, "The Antarctic Minerals Negotiations Process," *American Journal of International Law* 81, 4 (October 1987), 888 – 905 and Bernard H. Oxman, "Evaluating the Antarctic Minerals Convention: The Decision-Making System," *The University of Miami Inter-American Law Review* 21,1 (Fall, 1989) 17–80.

## Resources, environmentalists and the UN, c.1982–1991

During the CRAMRA and CCAMLR negotiations, the ATS and the environment it governed came under intense international scrutiny. Already in their report on the meeting at the Nansen Institute in 1972, South African officials remarked that ‘... there is a growing interest in Antarctica by developing countries, not only in view of the fishing potential, but also because of important minerals and oil deposits. For this reason some circles view the so-called “exclusive club” operating within the ATS with suspicion and jealousy.’<sup>141</sup>

The challenges came from two groups, who both wanted to apply the ‘common heritage of mankind’ principle to Antarctica, but who had different visions of what this meant. On the one hand there were the developing countries, led by Malaysia, who wanted a more inclusive Antarctic regime, where they too could share in the ‘Antarctic riches.’<sup>142</sup> On the other hand there was a strong environmental lobby, mostly based in developed countries, who wanted Antarctica to be declared a World Park.

CCAMLR saw the first sustained lobbying of non-governmental groups to participate in Antarctic matters. The International Union for Nature Conservation (IUCN) sought status at the CCAMLR negotiations, which were criticised by more activist bodies like Greenpeace for being too secretive and exclusive.<sup>143</sup> Pressure groups such as the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC)<sup>144</sup> that encompassed around 150 environmental groups, including Greenpeace and Save the Whale, were highly visible and garnered the most press attention. The environmental movement concerning Antarctica and the Southern Ocean was part of broader global environmental activism and informed by the Stockholm Conference of 1972<sup>145</sup> and the ‘common heritage of mankind’ principle that proved influential in the Law of the Sea

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<sup>141</sup> Director-General, Department of Environment Affairs to Director-General Foreign Affairs, 14 June 1984, DIRCO BTS 102/2/11 vol.6.

<sup>142</sup> Ali, “Those Icy Wastes May Hide a Fortune”; Nard. D Nossiter, “Antarctic Riches – Fear of a Third World Grab,” *The Star* (30 September 1977); Sapa, “Antarktika-rykdom wek wêreldkommer,” *Hoofstad* (8 October 1977); “Halt to Antarctica’s Exploitation Called,” *The Friend* (10 October 1977).

<sup>143</sup> Richard A. Herr, “The changing roles of non-governmental organisations in the Antarctic Treaty System,” Stokke and Vidas, eds, *Governing the Antarctic*, 92.

<sup>144</sup> They were eventually granted observer status in 1988, after CCAMLR went into force. *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>145</sup> The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment gave focus to the idea that one should not only care about the well-being of wild species of animals and plants but concomitantly in human-wellbeing. Raymond F. Dasmann, “Toward a Biosphere Consciousness,” Donald Worster, ed, *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 277.

negotiations.<sup>146</sup> The idea of declaring Antarctica a world park was raised at the second World Conference on National Parks in 1972.<sup>147</sup>

In South Africa, where Greenpeace was not represented, the Antarctic was made an environmental cause by the local Dolphin Action and Protection Group based in Simon's Town, who were especially vociferous in the South African English print media.<sup>148</sup> Activism was not encouraged in South Africa in the 1970s and the 1980s and it should be noted that the DAPG (Dolphin Action and Protest Group) letters of protests almost exclusively pertained to animal welfare and rights, incorporating South Africa's 'Save the Whale' and 'Dolphins should be Free' campaigns. The DAPG made little mention of the issues concerned from the viewpoint of the Group of 77, for instance, that included human food consumption in the equation. The South African Department of Foreign Affairs was aware of the popularity and influence of these movements elsewhere. The United States and New Zealand delegations for instance included them in their delegations. The South African officials took care not to alienate the DPAG and replied to their queries.<sup>149</sup>

### **'The Question of Antarctica' and South Africa at the UN, 1983–1992**

In 1982, the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) convention, based on the common heritage principle, or *res communis*, was opened for signature. The next year, the *United Nations Debate on Antarctica* sought to apply similar principles to the Antarctic continent.<sup>150</sup> Backed by many developing countries, Malaysia tabled a resolution at the UN General Assembly insisting on three things. First, Antarctica must be seen as 'common heritage.' They also called on the Secretary General to launch an inquiry into the Antarctic Treaty System under a special committee. Lastly, they demanded a moratorium on mineral

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<sup>146</sup> Pyne, *The Ice*, 370.

<sup>147</sup> Bastmeijer, *The Antarctic Environmental Protocol*, 47.

<sup>148</sup> Personal communication, John Cooper (5 August 2011).

<sup>149</sup> See for example the following letters: Nan Rice to Derek Moll, 15 March 1984; Derek Moll to Nan Rice, 16 May 1984, DIRCO BTS 102/2/10 vol. 6 and Nan Rice to J. Pretorius, 8 February 1985; T.G. Visser to Nan Rice, 26 March 1985, DIRCO BTS 102/2/11 vol. 8.

<sup>150</sup> This was done upon Malaysian initiative, who sought to take a leading position in the Non-Aligned Movement. Bernard P. Herber, "The Common Heritage Principle: Antarctica and the Developing Nations," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 50, 4 (October 1991), 394. The Law of the Sea went into force in 1994. It has not been signed by the United States.

negotiations.<sup>151</sup> Added to the resolution was a clause that apartheid South Africa should be excluded from the Treaty System as part of the global fight against the apartheid regime.<sup>152</sup>

Whilst for the most part South Africa was used as a pawn in the match over Antarctica, one geologist wanted to invert this particular power relationship, and argued that the continent and its sea-floor should be mined to make the world less dependent on South African minerals.<sup>153</sup> His comments were seen as unrealistic, especially as experienced companies thought Antarctic mining unfeasible in the medium term.<sup>154</sup>

The attack on South Africa was widely seen amongst the Treaty parties as a way for Malaysia to garner the support of African countries to further Malaysia's cause, which questioned the exclusivity of the Antarctic Treaty.<sup>155</sup> The first couple of resolutions on the 'Question of Antarctica' were accepted by a majority at the UN, with not all the Treaty parties participating in the vote. The clause on South Africa was not present in the final draft. In 1985, however, a separate draft resolution on the expulsion of South Africa from the Antarctic Treaty was tabled, and accepted with a large majority. India and China were the only Treaty parties to vote in favour of the resolution on South Africa, whilst all Parties absented themselves from the vote on 'the Question of Antarctica'.<sup>156</sup> On absenting themselves from the vote on South Africa in the Treaty, the Australian representative who spoke on behalf of the Treaty Parties said in the General Assembly debate in 1985 that 'Antarctica was a case where the

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<sup>151</sup> South African delegation at Hobart to Department of Foreign Affairs, 21 September 1984, DIRCO BTS 102/2/11 vol. 7.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Maarten J. de Wit, *Minerals and mining in Antarctica: science, technology and politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 48.

<sup>154</sup> South African companies were sceptic when asked to comment on technical matters. It is, of course, possible that their technical scepticism was tainted by the potential competition they faced from Antarctic mining. Even so, international companies such as British Petroleum (BP) also expressed their scepticism. Most companies were especially sceptic that there would be sufficient incentive to conduct exploration work in Antarctica given the environmental restrictions and the terms of CRAMRA. J.L du Toit (Soekor) to Director General, Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs "Ontwikkeling van minerale in die Antarktika," 7 April 1988; A.M.D Gnodde (Goldfields of South Africa Limited) to Director General, Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs, "Development of Antarctica's Minerals," 31 March 1988; D.J Crowe (Anglovaal Limited) to Director General, Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs, "Development of Antarctica's Minerals," 29 March 1988; A.A. Sealy (Rand Mines) to Director General, Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs, "Development of Antarctic Minerals," G.W.H Relly (Anglo American) to Director General, Department of Mineral and Energy Affairs, "Development of Antarctica's Mineral Resources," 8 April 1988; DIRCO BTS 102/2/10 vol.9

<sup>155</sup> It should also be remembered that Malaysia supported the ANC-in-exile – although most contemporary authors did not take this into account.

<sup>156</sup> India was co-opted in 1983 to join the Treaty and went from acceding party to consultative party in less than a month. It provided the Treaty powers with a much need developing world ally. (To put it into perspective, the process took sixteen years for Poland). Vidas, "The Antarctic Treaty System in the international community," 9.

fundamental difference over apartheid should not inhibit the pursuit of objectives which could advance the interests of mankind.<sup>157</sup> It remained a fraught issue for South Africa, who was reliant on the political will of the Treaty powers to rebuff the attempts of UN interference in the system. A resolution to make the Antarctic a global commons was more threatening than a resolution to expel a non-claimant country against which most of the Treaty powers had raised sanctions.

As a result of the international attention, and the worsening domestic situation, when it was South Africa's turn to host the nineteenth biennial SCAR meeting, in June 1986 it was rather unceremoniously moved to San Diego.<sup>158</sup> This was in contrast to the pre-resolution events and was seen as affirmation of South Africa's standing in SCAR. J.P de Wit, the president of the CSIR and SASCAR chairman, was voted vice-chairman of SCAR at the 1982 meeting in Leningrad (St Petersburg)<sup>159</sup> and Wilderness, a town on South Africa's touristic Garden Route hosted a reasonably successful SCAR Biology meeting in 1983, with only Russia, East Germany and Belgium not attending.<sup>160</sup>

The minerals negotiations led to intense international scrutiny of the ATS and as mentioned, South Africa's participation in Antarctica was added to the already bulky file of UN resolutions against the apartheid government. Halfway into the decade, the departments concerned decided that it was necessary for South Africa to reconsider its Antarctic policy and strategy and to draw up a new policy document as the previous one was twenty-five years old.<sup>161</sup> Fittingly, the concept memorandum, drawn up by the Department of Environmental Affairs also focussed on the political and resource advantages of Antarctic activities.<sup>162</sup>

While environmental and scientific concerns probably influenced their approach, the political impetus for sending senior staff members to these meetings was based on the international platform these multi-lateral negotiations offered the increasingly isolated South Africa. Many

<sup>157</sup> Laverde, "The Development, Pursuit and Maintenance of a South African Antarctic Policy," 95.

<sup>158</sup> They were not sure if Russia – and by extension other east-bloc countries – would attend but India indicated that they will. T.G Visser to P.A Grobelaar, 3 April 1985, DIRCO BTS 102/2/9/1 vol. 5.

<sup>159</sup> "WNNR-man oorsee gekies," *Oggendblad* (24 July 1982); Bevis Fairbrother, "Hostilities 'on ice' at the Pole," *Sunday Times* (8 August 1982) in DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol.5.

<sup>160</sup> Belgium was not an active member of SCAR at the time. The George municipality, under which Wilderness fell, removed petty apartheid signs in the vicinity to avoid 'hurting' the 180 visitors. Brenda Hartdegen, "Ice thaws apartheid," *Sunday Times* (18 September 1983) in DIRCO BTS 102/2/9 vol.5.

<sup>161</sup> Director: International Organisations "Suid-Afrikaanse Wetenskaplike Komitee vir Antarktiese Navorsing (SAWKAN) – Vergadering: Dinsdag 29 Oktober 1985: Bykomende Verantwoordelikhede vir hierdie direktoraat," 7 November 1985, DIRCO BTS 102/2/9/1 vol. 5.

<sup>162</sup> Departement van Omgewingsake: Suid-Afrikaanse deelname aan Antarktiese Navorsing, DIRCO BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.11.

of the meetings were technical in nature, and interviewees overwhelmingly denied that there were political mandates unrelated to the topic at hand that they had to pursue, for example during lunch or tea. The reports of the CCAMLR meetings, throughout 1980 to 1995 however, contained paragraphs on how the South Africans perceived their position politically and how they informed their colleagues of the political situation at home. South Africa's sensitivity to being recognised as an equal partner was underlined when the issue of Chilean chairmanship of CCAMLR was raised. Some countries did not want the politically controversial Chile (it was during Augusto Pinochet's rule) chair the commission. It was pointed out in the subsequent debate that, based on the principle of equality, Chile 'or for that matter South Africa,' should be allowed to chair.<sup>163</sup> The South African delegation was pragmatic enough to not wish international attention upon its participation, but was nevertheless relieved that: 'the position, as happened in the Antarctic Treaty where South Africa was more or less blackmailed into foregoing its chance of offering a meeting, should therefore not occur in this forum when it comes to South Africa's turn to act as chairman.'<sup>164</sup> In one case South Africa's representative used the opportunity of signing CRAMRA in Auckland, New Zealand, to make other diplomatic calls as well (political travel to New Zealand was severely restricted at the time.)<sup>165</sup>

### ***Environmentalists, sovereignty and the failure of CRAMRA***

Other than Malaysia, the block calling for Antarctica to be declared a global commons was the environmental lobby. CRAMRA drew even more attention from environmental activist groups than CCAMLR. ASOC, and associated groups like Greenpeace, called for Antarctica to be declared a world park, banning mineral exploitation and using it for scientific purposes only – in as far as the research led to a better understanding of the wider globe. Several incidents added fuel to their fire. In 1985 the 'discovery' of the 'ozone hole' in Antarctica was widely publicised (previously, the very low ozone levels were thrown out by the measuring models as too low and thus not picked up). Closely following this, the construction of an airstrip by the French close to a penguin rookery at Dumont D'Urville, where the French base

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<sup>163</sup> PD Oelofsen and GH Stander, Report of the S.A Delegation to the First Meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources: Hobart, Australia, 24 May – 11 June 1982, DIRCO BTS 102/2/11 vol.4.

<sup>164</sup> ATCM hosts were chosen alphabetically and South Africa and the U.S.S.R were skipped in the 1970s by wordless consent amongst Treaty parties. PD Oelofsen and GH Stander, Report of the S.A Delegation to the First Meeting of the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources: Hobart, Australia, 24 May – 11 June 1982, DIRCO BTS 102/2/11 vol.4.

<sup>165</sup> FD Tothill to Department of Foreign Affairs, 2 December 1988, DIRCO BTS 102/2/10 vol. 10.

was situated, was heavily protested against in 1985-6 by Greenpeace and publicised as an example that the Treaty parties failed to consider the environmental impact of the French actions.<sup>166</sup> In 1987 Greenpeace established 'World Park Base' which operated until 1991. They exposed some of the worst environmental malpractices at large bases such as McMurdo.<sup>167</sup> The environmental lobby had the support of well-known personalities like oceanographer Jacques-Yves Cousteau.<sup>168</sup> The World Commission on Development and Environment brought out the so-called Brundtland report in 1987. It included Antarctica in its call for environmental consciousness.<sup>169</sup> By 1989, when the *Exxon Valdez* and *Bahai Paraiso* leaked mass amounts of oil into the oceans and ice of Alaska and the Antarctic respectively, environmental NGOs had placed Antarctica firmly in the public's mind.

Again, this cause was promoted by Nan Rice and her Dolphin Action group in South Africa. The South African press, however, focussed on the potential 'third world grab' and that the *status quo* should be upheld. Whilst these controversies were raging Armscor, South Africa's arms manufacturer, approached the South African Department of Environmental Affairs to establish an airstrip on Marion Island.<sup>170</sup> The resultant Environmental Impact Report that strongly opposed the building of such an airstrip was widely distributed amongst Treaty parties with the intent to gain environmental leverage, even though the Islands fell outside the Treaty area (see chapter five).

The environmental lobby was, however, much stronger in Australia than South Africa. Partly because of a domestic election strategy and partly because it had reservations about the impact of CRAMRA on its sovereignty, Australia announced in early 1989 that it would not sign CRAMRA.<sup>171</sup> It soon convinced France to do the same and together they tabled a proposal that called for a comprehensive environmental protection plan. Treaty parties like the US and Britain, were not impressed.<sup>172</sup> Gradually, however, consensus was built for a mining

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<sup>166</sup> This should be seen against the background of French secret agents sinking the *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland harbour because of its role in protesting French nuclear testing. The construction was later abandoned. Tom Griffiths *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 265. For Greenpeace's version of events: Steve Morgan, 'World Park Antarctica,' (25 February 2010) at [www.greenpeace.org/how-we-saved-antarctica](http://www.greenpeace.org/how-we-saved-antarctica) (Accessed 29 August 2011).

<sup>167</sup> Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence*, 278.

<sup>168</sup> Bernard H. Oxman, "Evaluating the Antarctic Minerals Convention: The Decision-Making System," *The University of Miami Inter-American Law Review* 21, 1 (Fall, 1989), 22.

<sup>169</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development, "Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future" [Chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland], (1987), 216.

<sup>170</sup> SASCAR Minutes, Matters of Interest, Paragraph 4.1.2. 3 March 1983. DIRCO 102/2/9/1 vol. 8.

<sup>171</sup> Catherine Redgwell, "Environmental Protection in Antarctica: The 1991 Protocol," *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 43, 3 (July 1994), 599-603 and Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence*, 278.

<sup>172</sup> Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence*, 278.

ban under an environmental protection regime and in 1991 a Protocol on the Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty was signed in Madrid. It banned mining for fifty years.<sup>173</sup> The protocol was received well by NGOs<sup>174</sup> and soon thereafter enthusiasm for the Malaysian initiative at the UN started to fade.<sup>175</sup>

## Internal Challenges

The external pressure on South Africa's involvement with Antarctica from Malaysia and the non-aligned movement at the UN exacerbated tensions within South Africa about control over Antarctic and sub-Antarctic science. Arguably more so than UN pressure, it was internal fault lines that threatened the continuation of South Africa's research activities at its most remote outposts.

These internal frictions usually played out in debates about how South Africa should manage its Antarctic and sub-Antarctic interests. Since 1960, there had been suggestions, mostly by scientists, of centralising South Africa's Antarctic and sub-Antarctic activities in one unit similar to the CSIR that would coordinate everything from science to logistics, but this never came to fruition as the departments involved could not come to an agreement with regards to budget responsibilities.<sup>176</sup> Moreover, External Affairs was afraid that if such a unit was given direct access to SCAR and Treaty meetings, the 'Union might express different views on the same theme.'<sup>177</sup> The Department of Transport continued to play a coordinating role with the organisational structure beneath being continually reconstituted as programme budgets and priorities shifted (for example, delegates from the Department of Mining and Industry were added during the CRAMRA negotiations). As shown earlier as well, there were varying degrees of tension and cooperation between the scientists, the bureaucrats and the diplomats

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<sup>173</sup> Bastmeijer, *The Antarctic Environmental Protocol*, 49–50.

<sup>174</sup> Greenpeace took much of the credit. Steve Morgan, "World Park Antarctica," (25 February 2010) at [www.greenpeace.org/how-we-saved-antarctica](http://www.greenpeace.org/how-we-saved-antarctica) (Accessed 29 August 2011).

<sup>175</sup> Background document: "The United Nations: Question of Antarctica," (1992), DIRCO BTS 102/2/. Malaysia acceded to the Antarctic Treaty in August 2011.

<sup>176</sup> Another memorandum was drawn up in 1966. D.C. Neethling "A Plea for the Establishment of A South African Antarctic Institute," April 1966, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7 vol. 21 and Report on Meeting of SANCAR by delegate from Department of External Affairs (unsigned but probably P.H. Philip), 17 June 1960; W. Malan, Memorandum on SANCAR, June 1960; Minutes of Meeting of the Founding Committee of SANCAR, 6 May 1960; Recommendations of the sub-committee appointed by SANCAR under chairmanship of Professor SP Jackson, 10 May 1960, SAB BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.2. At the time of writing, the issue is still on the table. South Africa came close to establishing an Antarctic institute in 2009, but a cabinet re-shuffle led to new politicians and directors-general entering the fray and the plans were again put on hold.

<sup>177</sup> Report on Meeting of SANCAR by delegate from Department of External Affairs (unsigned but probably P.H. Philip), 17 June 1960, SAB BTS 102/2/9/1 vol.2.

throughout the history of South African involvement in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic.<sup>178</sup> Broadly speaking, the Department of Transport was responsible for the coordination and logistics, the Department of Public Works for the buildings, the CSIR for science and the Department of External (later Foreign) Affairs for the political aspects.<sup>179</sup>

In 1985 the responsibility for coordinating South Africa's Antarctic programme was given to the Department of Environmental Affairs and Water Affairs, which had just been created as a separate department in the PW Botha cabinet.<sup>180</sup> The reasons for the move remain unclear, but it probably related to the stronger emphasis on resource conservation and natural science.<sup>181</sup> During the late 1980s, however, these internal tensions, compounded by both budgetary constraints and international pressure precipitated a crisis that forced the re-evaluation of South Africa's Antarctic programme and its relevance in a rapidly changing geopolitical world.

In 1989 the Department of Environmental Affairs decided to sever ties with the CSIR and take over the function of scientific coordination. The immediate reasons behind this decision were manifold, including the restructuring and commercialisation of the CSIR, a breakdown in the working relationship between the CSIR scientists and Environmental Affairs bureaucrats, personality clashes and calls to streamline the scientific programme.<sup>182</sup> The

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<sup>178</sup> Also corroborated by Dirk van Schalkwyk, involved from 1974–2002, and in a coordinating role, including director from 1985–2000, Pretoria (11 October 2010) and Henry Valentine, director of the Directorate: Antarctica and Islands, Department of Environmental Affairs, Cape Town (18 August 2010).

<sup>179</sup> The CSIR was officially added in 1963. Other committees established included the Interdepartmental Antarctic Committee, the Antarctic Management Committee and the Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research. Gert Kotze, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Water Affairs to Dr G van N Viljoen Minister of State Development and National Education, "WNNR Betrokkenheid by Suid-Afrikaanse Navorsing op Antarktika en Eilande," 28 August 1989, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7 vol.32.

<sup>180</sup> From here on referred to as the Department of Environmental Affairs.

<sup>181</sup> See introduction about access to the files of the Department of Environmental Affairs.

<sup>182</sup> In the late 1980s the CSIR was restructured and commercialised with the Antarctic functions moved to one of its operational groups – the Foundation for Research Development (FRD). The restructuring led to new financial models that the FRD deemed incompatible with the current procedures of funding Antarctic science. They requested a larger budget and more financial oversight, which the Department of Environmental Affairs was not willing to do as they argued that it would be against the provisions of the Treasury and Audit Act of 1975. Moreover, according to the Minister of Environmental Affairs, the CSIR personnel were appropriating themselves 'rights and powers' that were not agreed upon. Examples of these the Minister gave included the wrongful appropriation of funds (to attend international SCAR meetings). Naudé Steyn, the Foreign Affairs representative, later included an incident where Pat Condy, the chief scientist, went to an Antarctic meeting in Switzerland without informing the Department of Environmental Affairs. That this would be seen as a major misstep was partly symptomatic of the authority that the apartheid state sought over its citizens, especially during the successive states of emergency. Steyn also remarked on the personality clash between Pat Condy and Frits Gaum, a 'short-tempered' adjunct-director at Environmental Affairs. Dirk van Schalkwyk, director of the Antarctic programme was given the task of coordinating science. He had no scientific background himself but was a skilled diplomat and highly efficient bureaucrat and had more respect from scientists than they usually show bureaucrats. Gert Kotze, Minister of

Department of Foreign Affairs was not officially consulted about the move of science coordination from the CSIR (and the FRD as its subsidiary) to the Department of Environmental Affairs. Foreign Affairs feared that ‘the reallocation...holds negative implications for SA’s international relationships w.r.t. Antarctic research activities.’<sup>183</sup> The argument went that, if run by a government department as opposed to a scientific institution, claims to scientific universalism that helped to keep South Africa in the Treaty would be harder to make.<sup>184</sup> From the government’s viewpoint, the role of science in Antarctica was unambiguous, as the Minister of Environment wrote to his colleague:

It must be kept in mind that South Africa’s research/scientific activities in Antarctica are supplementary to a political goal. As member of the Antarctic Treaty South Africa must assert its presence and amongst other things it is required of members to make a research contribution. Research is a means to a political end and not the primary reason for South Africa’s presence there.<sup>185</sup>

He continued by saying that due to the high research costs, funds must solely be directed towards high quality research, and where possible, ‘to South Africa’s direct benefit.’<sup>186</sup> The Minister mentioned krill, mineral research and weather data as examples of economically beneficial research.<sup>187</sup> Scientists too feared that their research efforts, especially in Antarctica, were becoming ‘third world’, consisting only of ‘data-collection’ and ‘equipment maintenance.’<sup>188</sup> The breakdown in the relationship between the Department of Environmental Affairs and the CSIR was irreparable. It was only post-apartheid South Africa, when the ANC-led government ensured that they would continue with the Antarctic programme, that the science became funded by a *bone fide* research body again.

Environmental Affairs and Water Affairs to Dr G van N Viljoen Minister of State Development and National Education, “WNNR Betrokkenheid by Suid-Afrikaanse Navorsing op Antarktika en Eilande,” 28 August 1989, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7 vol.32.

<sup>183</sup> South African Ambassador to Germany to Department of Foreign Affairs, “Antarktiese Navorsingsaksies,” 17 August 1989, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7/3 vol. 32.

<sup>184</sup> The Minister of Environmental Affairs denied that the Department wanted to be link between South Africa’s scientists and ICSU/SCAR. He wrote that an independent committee of scientists would be appointed for this purpose. South African Ambassador to Germany to Department of Foreign Affairs “Antarktiese Navorsingsaksies,” 17 August 1989 and Gert Kotze, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Water Affairs to Dr G van N Viljoen Minister of State Development and National Education, “WNNR Betrokkenheid by Suid-Afrikaanse Navorsing op Antarktika en Eilande,” 28 August 1989, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7/3 vol. 32.

<sup>185</sup> Gert Kotze, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Water Affairs to Dr G van N Viljoen Minister of State Development and National Education, “WNNR Betrokkenheid by Suid-Afrikaanse Navorsing op Antarktika en Eilande,” 28 August 1989, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7 vol.32.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

### ***Taking Antarctica beyond Apartheid***

The relationship between South Africa's political and scientific presence in Antarctica and the Islands was not simply a case of ordering scientists to Antarctica as they would order troops to a battlefield. Scientists would often emphasise the possible economic and strategic applications of their research<sup>189</sup> and some government officials were curious about science beyond the political and administrative aspects of science.<sup>190</sup>

Memoranda started pointing towards the fact that South Africa was the only country in Africa with an Antarctic presence. In the light of African support for the UN resolution against South Africa's participation in the Treaty, this fact was rather indignantly referred to: 'The irony of this futile and vindictive campaign against South Africa is that South Africa is the only country on the African continent making a real and internationally recognised contribution to scientific research in the Antarctic.'<sup>191</sup> Post-apartheid, much was again made of South Africa's presence in Antarctica as the only African ATCP but as representative of Africa, rather than *unlike* the rest of Africa.<sup>192</sup>

### ***Strategic considerations***

Two of the major strategic motivations for South African involvement in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic became superfluous in the five years following the restructuring of South Africa's Antarctic programme. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent dismantling of the Soviet Union in 1990 greatly diminished the military threat of a communist strike from the south. With the demise of apartheid South Africa was welcomed back into the world and the function of Antarctica and the Islands as means to engage on a multilateral level was redundant. Although military and multi-lateral considerations were foregrounded during the isolation years, the strategic value of minerals and marine resources regained prominence throughout the late 1970s and 1980s.<sup>193</sup> The Madrid Protocol codified environmental concerns. In 1995, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism

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<sup>189</sup> See Appendix E in Laverde, "The Development, Pursuit and Maintenance of a South African Antarctic Policy."

<sup>190</sup> This could be either professionally or personally. Interviews with Gustav Nel, Pretoria (12 October 2010) and Kim Gierdien, Cape Town (17 August 2010).

<sup>191</sup> "African Group Urges South Africa's Exclusion from Consultative Meetings of the Treaty," December 1989, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7 vol.32.

<sup>192</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. Cabinet Memorandum: "Continuation of the South African National Antarctic Programme, (SANAP)," Revision 5, 30 May 1995, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7 vol. 37.

<sup>193</sup> Minerals and marine resources (whales) were also major incentives from the 1920s to the early 1950s, but in a colonial world. Whaling and minerals were key considerations in the 1935 memorandum, for example (see chapter two).

presented the Government of National Unity (GNU) with a memorandum on the continuation of the South African National Antarctic Programme (SANAP).<sup>194</sup> The ‘preservation of potential economic options’ and the ‘utilization and conservation of natural resources’ remained strategic considerations. Atmospheric and cryospheric sciences in Antarctica provided valuable data for global warming.<sup>195</sup> In the context of global warming as a threat to humankind, the weather returned as a central issue in South Africa’s Antarctic interests: ‘With the impacts of desertification in Southern Africa, the greater occurrence of extreme weather vents (more droughts, floods, etc.), possible sea temperature rise and its effects on ecosystems, and so on, the money spent on Antarctic research is a small investment to safeguard South Africa’s planning for the survival of its people.’<sup>196</sup>

The Department of Environmental Affairs consulted leading scientists before drawing up the memorandum and scientists were also closely involved with formulating the strategy.<sup>197</sup> Unlike the memoranda that were drawn up during the apartheid years, this memorandum referred to the value of Antarctic research for the *people* of South Africa rather than just South Africa as an abstraction. It made explicit mention of the post-apartheid Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and the contribution that SANAP can make ‘through high quality scientific endeavour’ to ‘development of technology’ and ‘training of skilled manpower and building capacity.’<sup>198</sup>

On ground-level, the civil servants in charge initially had less lofty ideals, as was illustrated by the controversy surrounding the colours of SANAE IV. Plans to replace SANAE III were already announced in 1991.<sup>199</sup> They were put on hold as uncertainties about funding were raised, but eventually, in 1997, a new base was unveiled. It was, in the words of the team

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<sup>194</sup> In terms of the interim post-apartheid constitution, the government, known as the Government of National Unity (GNU) was structured around specific power-sharing deals. The National Party left the GNU in 1996 and the requirement for the GNU lapsed in 1999.

<sup>195</sup> The cryosphere is the portions of the earth’s surface where water is in solid form (e.g. permafrost, ice sheets, snow-cover).

<sup>196</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. Cabinet Memorandum: “Continuation of the South African National Antarctic Programme, (SANAP),” Revision 5, 30 May 1995, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7 vol. 37.

<sup>197</sup> A.D.M Walker, a professor in physics at the University of Natal (now University of KwaZulu Natal) was closely involved with this. He has also served on the SCAR executive. Personal communication with John Rash, University of KwaZulu Natal, (20 June 2011).

<sup>198</sup> Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. Cabinet Memorandum: “Continuation of the South African National Antarctic Programme, (SANAP),” Revision 5, 30 May 1995, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7 vol. 37.

<sup>199</sup> “SA gaan nuwe basis oprig op Antarktika,” *Die Burger* (22 November 1991); Johan Coetzee, “SA kry nuwe basis in Antarktika,” *Finansies & Tegniek* (22 November 1991); John Yeld, “Show house Down South: South Africa’s new R18m ice base unveiled,” *The Argus* (22 November 1991); “Nuwe huis vir manne in die ys,” *Die Transvaler* (22 November 1991); “SA to build new Antarctic base,” *The Citizen* (22 November 1991).

leader to first occupy the base, the ‘biggest old South African flag ever constructed.’<sup>200</sup> The base sported the orange, white and blue of the apartheid-era flag.<sup>201</sup> Officials tried to argue that the orange, in particular, was ‘Day-Glo’ orange and as such it was chosen for visibility. In retrospect, few denied that there was a political meaning behind the colours, but none wanted to disclose who took the final decision despite warnings that the colours would in all possibility be offensive. The colours were embedded in the fibre glass. The Department of Public Works was forced to import a special paint to provide a veneer of transformation.<sup>202</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has provided insight into the motivations behind South Africa’s involvement in the Antarctic from the 1960s until the demise of the apartheid state. Three themes emerged. First was that the South African government tried to turn the Antarctic project into a nationalist exercise, unlike the case with the Prince Edward Islands where the government actively downplayed nationalistic rhetoric. However, although the Antarctic endeavours lend themselves to nationalist paraphernalia, it was not clear that this was necessarily successful. Secondly, national prestige, although important, was not the primary reason with increased engagement with the Antarctic. Southern ocean military security also remained an important factor in South African involvement in Antarctica and the Islands.<sup>203</sup> The press also worriedly reported that the Soviet Union was commencing flights from Maputo to Antarctica, reminding the already paranoid South African public of Antarctica’s geographic proximity.<sup>204</sup> (The paranoia did not always translate to the actual Antarctic environment. Soviet vessels called on

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<sup>200</sup> Interview with David Frank, Johannesburg (19 March 2010)

<sup>201</sup> Melanie Gosling, “Old Flag colours at SANAE IV – a matter of vision,” *The Cape Times* (10 February 1997); Melanie Gosling, “Colours of new Antarctic ‘Sun City’ make MP see red,” *The Star* (10 February 1997).

<sup>202</sup> Interviews with Hennie Stassen, Johannesburg (12 October 2010); Henry Valentine, Cape Town (18 August 2010); Dirk van Schalkwyk, Pretoria (11 October 2010) and David Frank, Johannesburg (19 March 2010)

<sup>203</sup> This was highlighted by the Falklands War and South Africa’s covert role in it. The Falklands War came at a time when the South African National Defence Force gained increasing hold over the South African government, especially under the leadership of Prime Minister P.W Botha and interdepartmental communication, especially between Foreign Affairs and the military deteriorated. South Africa’s role, or position on the Falklands, were not mentioned in documents relating to the southern ocean or south Atlantic in general, and the Defense Archives pertaining to this era is still largely classified. There is much scope and need for studies on South Africa’s role in this War, and its wider geopolitical repercussions for South Africa.

<sup>204</sup> “New Maputo Air Route,” *The Daily News* (25 February 1980); John Baker White, “The Antarctic Connection,” *The Natal Witness* (20 April 1980); “Rooi vlug teen SA gebruik,” *Die Burger* (4 July 1980); “Afrika is ‘n oefenveld vir dié Rooi strategie,” *Die Oosterlig* (15 July 1980); “Rooi plan met ysgebied bekyk,” *Die Volksblad* (15 August 1981). The latter article referred to Soviet scientists that defected to France whilst on the French Kerguelen Islands, which falls outside the Treaty area.

Marion Island at least twice in the 1980s with very social encounters between the visitors and the team members.)<sup>205</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s, the resource potential of the continent and its surrounding seas was an added motivation. In this sense, more *worth* was added to the continent and the science performed there. These factors were important for South Africa but there was an added dimension to the South African enthusiasm for the ATS – a platform where they could interact with their peers on a (relatively) equal footing. What kept South Africa in the Antarctic was its isolation elsewhere.

Lastly, this chapter demonstrated how, when South Africa was not internationally isolated anymore, it was the tropes of global warming and the survival of mankind that was brought to the fore.

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<sup>205</sup> One visit was particularly social – the ship that visited was a ‘dry ship’ but did not mean the men had to refrain from alcohol when calling on Marion. Another was for medical reasons. Team members, reminiscing about it in a rather different geopolitical world, did not remember any activities that could specifically be construed as spying. Interview with Ordino Kok, Bloemfontein (26 March 2010).

## Chapter 5

# ‘...this 90 square miles of weird desolation’: Science and the Environment in the History of South Africa’s Prince Edward Islands, 1947–1995<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The sub-Antarctic islands, such as South Africa’s Prince Edward Islands, are a unique site for exploring histories of ‘wilderness,’ natural science and conservation. Unlike, for instance histories written about national parks, where the human inhabitants were ‘written out’ of the space in order to return it to some kind of imagined primordial ‘wild’ landscape, these Islands were really ‘empty’ and ‘wild’ spaces – if the lack of human habitation and ‘civilisation’ were measures for wilderness.<sup>2</sup> Until recently, few historians studying the interrelations between humans and the non-human environment have considered studying uninhabited places. As an editorial in the journal *Environmental History* asked ‘What might environmental history look like if pushed to places so extreme they lack human settlement or even life?’<sup>3</sup> This chapter is in part an attempt to apply this question, by writing about one such place.<sup>4</sup> This South African island group is at once an insular space, the domain of a few scientists and bureaucrats, yet it is also a place that carries little meaning outside a global geopolitical and scientific context. This chapter then traces changes in how these two small

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from “Lived on Marion Island,” *Cape Times*, (5 January 1948).

<sup>2</sup> For an early example on questioning wilderness, see Roderick Nash, “The Value of Wilderness,” *Environmental Review: ER* 1(3) (1976): 12-25. One of the most influential pieces on this aspect of environmental history was William Cronon’s “The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature.” It was republished in *Environmental History* 1 (January 1996): 2–28, together with a response to comments from environmental historians, Samuel P. Hays, Thomas R. Dunlap and Michael P. Cohen. There are also several southern African works, for example Jane Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park: A Social and Political History* (Durban: University of Natal Press, 1995); Terence Ranger “Whose Heritage? The Case of Matoba National Park,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15(1989) and Shirley Brooks “Images of ‘Wild Africa’: Nature Tourism and the (re)creation of Hluhluwe Game Reserve, 1930-1945,” *The Journal of Historical Geography* 31 (2005), 220–240.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Pyne, editorial “Extreme Environments: An Interdisciplinary Forum,” *Environmental History* 15 (July 2010), 508. These places include, for example, Polar Regions, the high seas and outer space.

<sup>4</sup> Since Stephen Pyne’s seminal *The Ice, a Journey to Antarctica* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986), more environmental historians started writing about Antarctica, although the number of works is still limited. See for example Brigid Hains, *The Ice and the Inland: Mawson, Flynn and the Myth of the Frontier* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002); Adrian J. Howkins, “Frozen Empires: A History of the Antarctic Sovereignty Dispute Between Britain, Argentina, and Chile, 1939-1959,” (PhD dissertation: Austin: University of Texas at Austin, 2002); Bernadette Hince, “The teeth of the wind – an environmental history of subantarctic islands,” (PhD dissertation: Australian National University, Canberra, 2006) and Tom Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). None of these included the Prince Edward Islands.

volcanic islands and their value to South Africa were perceived. As this chapter deals with the environment of the Islands, an environment that is unlike any environment in southern Africa, it will start with a short natural history. It will then continue by making reference to its twentieth century ‘uninhabited’ and ‘wilderness’ status. Drawing on key turning points in the history of South African involvement with the Prince Edward Islands, it will then map out the changing relationships between the human and the natural environment from 1947, when they were first occupied to 1995, when they were declared a special nature reserve.

## **A Short Natural History of the Prince Edward Islands**

The Prince Edward Islands are situated in the southern Indian Ocean about 1,800km SSE of Port Elizabeth, South Africa. They are isolated from other landmasses. The nearest land is a small island of the Illes de Crozet, a French sub-Antarctic group 950 kilometres away. The Prince Edward Islands are well within the latitudes known as the Roaring Forties. With little obstruction in the way of the winds, the Roaring Forties were named after their tempestuous westerlies and high swells. The ocean has a moderating influence on the Islands’ climate, which range between 3.6° Celsius in August and 7.9° Celsius in February. Both islands rise to about 1,200 metres above sea level and although precipitation occur an average of 308 days per year, the plateaux are fjaeldmarks – ‘wind deserts’ and covered in loose stones and broken lava. The slopes are covered with tundra-like vegetation and there are no trees or shrubs on the Islands. Protected valleys are densely vegetated and the coastal plain is interspersed with waterlogged mires. A number of marine birds use the island as a breeding platform. This includes four species of penguin, two albatross species and several species of petrels. The marine mammal fauna comprises one species of elephant seal, two species of fur seals and orcas (killer whales).<sup>5</sup>

The first humans to spend any length of time on the Islands were sealers in the nineteenth century, resulting in a large reduction of the seal population. Seen in this context, the question can be raised whether the islands really had been ‘uninhabited’, as some sealers stayed on the

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<sup>5</sup> A popular account is given in Aleks Terauds, Steven L. Chown, John Cooper and Peter Ryan, *Marion and Prince Edward: Africa's southern islands* (Stellenbosch: Sun Media, 2010). For a more comprehensive introduction to the Islands’ natural history, see Steven L. Chown and Pierre W. Froneman, eds, *The Prince Edward Islands: Land-Sea Interactions in a Changing Ecosystem* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2008). This description was drawn from Gerhard Heymann, T. Erasmus, B.J Huntley, A.C. Liebenberg, G. de F. Retief, P.R. Condy and O.A. van der Westhuysen, “Report to the Minister of Environment Affairs on an Environmental Impact Assessment of a Proposed Emergency Landing Facility on Marion Island – 1987,” South African National Scientific Programmes Report No. 140, (Pretoria: Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), 1987).

Island – and largely lived off the island, for months on end. Nevertheless, these visits were seasonal and dependent on an economy elsewhere. Humans never ‘settled’ or became an indigenized species.<sup>6</sup> Humans became a permanent presence on the Prince Edward Islands when the islands were occupied by the Union of South Africa in December 1947 and January 1948 (see chapter two). The occupation parties established a meteorological station on the larger Marion Island.

## **The nature of South Africa’s ‘new empire’, 1947– c.1957**

### ***The Islands at first glance***

The reaction of the South African press to the occupation of the Islands, an operation that was supposed to have remained a secret until the successful return of the annexation party, was one of surprise. There was some initial commentary on the Islands’ geopolitical significance and debate on whether South Africa acted in the interests of the British Empire or on its own. Soon, however, the Islands rather turned into a useful political anecdote to illustrate a point about the opposition, mostly used in jest.<sup>7</sup>

There was also a noticeable lack of nationalistic or indeed political rhetoric attached to the Islands *per se*. Since the Islands lacked both an environmental and cultural analogy with any part of southern Africa, it is possible they were not useful in terms of political rhetoric, except where their desolate and strange nature was concerned (see figure 5.1).

It was the rather strange and desolate nature that captured the press’s imagination in the weeks and months following the annexation. The complement of the SAS *Transvaal*, the vessel used in the occupation, was forbidden to speak to the press upon arrival back in South Africa because of the secret nature of the operation (although their intent was by now well-known). There was, therefore, as yet no first-hand account from this party about the

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<sup>6</sup> Brian Huntley, “Dairy” (1965-1966), 183. ALP, Private Collections, Brian Huntley. The longest known period spent by a sealer on the islands was when William Phelps remained on Marion Island for two years in the early nineteenth century, after he missed the ship that were to pick him up. ‘Webfoot’, *Fore and Aft, or Leaves from the Life of An Old Sailor* (Boston: Nichols & Hall: 1871). Thanks to John Cooper for telling me about ‘Webfoot.’ Also see Thierry Rousset, Rousset, “‘Might is Right’. A Study of the Cape Town/Crozets elephant seal oil trade (1832-1869),” (MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> At the time, in 1948, (white) South Africans were divided into two camps, the supporters of Dr Daniel F Malan (‘Nats’) and the supporters of Field-Marshal Jan Smuts (‘Sap’). These press articles included, for example: Anon, “SA plants Flag in the Antarctic – Island Annexed by Frigate – Air Base to be established,” *Cape Times* (3 January 1948); “Mystery of S.A. Frigate Solved: Union Flag Planted on Island in Southern Indian Ocean,” *Rand Daily Mail* (3 January 1948); “Polar Air-Bases,” *News Review* (15 January 1948); Editorial, “Two Islands and a Moral,” *Star* (January 1948); “Suidpool-Avontuur,” *Die Burger*, (5 January 1948); “Ons Suidpool-Empire,” *Die Burger* (9 January 1948).

occupation or what the Union's new Islands looked like. The press soon found a South African who had lived 'on this 90 square miles of weird desolation.'<sup>8</sup> Commander Quinton Bullard spent six weeks on Marion Island in 1930 conducting radio experiments and was called upon to give his impressions of the Islands.<sup>9</sup> For the first couple of years after the return of the first teams on Marion Island, a number of articles describing the Islands appeared. J.H Marsh and Ken Sara, a film maker, accompanied the *Gamtoos* on the first construction voyage. Soon afterwards Marsh's *No Pathway Here*, a popular, and for many years the *only*, narrative account of the annexation, appeared.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the works by some of the more creative team members, readers in South Africa could get acquainted with Cape Town's newest district through press reports, often widely syndicated. Descriptions of the island tended to emphasise absences, differences and extremes. There was particular focus on what was seen as the primordial nature of the place. Despite the foreignness of the Islands, similes and metaphors were abundant. Seals were described as 'primitive sea leopard [that] crawl on their bellies like giant caterpillars.'<sup>11</sup> Bob Grindley, one of the 'Landing Party' to hoist the South African flag, would later describe them as 'obstinate...slothful brutes' and that 'no amount of cursing, prodding or kicking' would make them move.<sup>12</sup>

### ***New Nationals and First Overlords***

When a place is colonised or occupied, there would be the expectation of subjugation, of taking control, preferably over some 'subject.' In the absence of a human presence on the Prince Edward Islands, the animals had to stand in as proxy subjects. In his account of the formalisation of South Africa's claim (when 'Snoektown' was built and the occupation ceremonially confirmed) Marsh wrote that the South Africans became 'responsible for many thousands additional lives... an amazing variety of birds and thousands of mammals.'<sup>13</sup> (See Figure 5.2) A song, written by the 'Landing Party' about their experiences, contains a verse about these 'people' of Marion:

We found that the Island was 'Peopled'

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<sup>8</sup> "Lived on Marion Island," *Cape Times*, (5 January 1948) in ALP, Private Collections. Album of Q.H Bullard

<sup>9</sup> "Lived on Marion Island."

<sup>10</sup> It was only in the 1980s that there was a renewed interest in writing about this history and accounts relied heavily on Marsh's book. When reading his account, it is clear that Marsh had access to top secret documents or at least their authors. As mentioned, Marsh moved in Smuts' circles.

<sup>11</sup> "Lived on Marion Island."

<sup>12</sup> B. Grindley, "Marion Island," *Kommando* (July 1954).

<sup>13</sup> J. H. Marsh, "Besieged by Birds: Marion Island Incident," magazine unknown, 1948 in ALP, Private Collection, John Cooper

By Albatross, Penguin and Seal.

Well they're the best ones to have it,

For us it holds no appeal.<sup>14</sup>

The *Star* included the contemporaneous issue around Afrikanerising the civil service as well as the relative absurdity of such formalities in uninhabited places in its editorial:

To convince the Marion Islanders of [the proclamation's] authenticity, it would undoubtedly be delivered in both official languages. The listening penguins, sea lions and albatrosses could thus catch in English any word or phrase that might have escaped them in Afrikaans – all the way from 'Under and by virtue of the powers in me vested by Section...' at the beginning to 'Given under my hand and Great Seal' at close. The winds howled by, the great Antarctic seas rolled on to the headlands and the penguins and albatrosses wondered. Only the sea-lions, catching the last sentence, understood. From where else could a valid proclamation better proceed than from the Great Seal?<sup>15</sup>

The most 'endearing' of the new citizens were the penguins, who with their upright gait and 'comic' countenance were easily anthropomorphised (they were also popular catches for zoos).<sup>16</sup> Tongue-in-the cheek references were made to the newest citizens of South Africa, and pictures taken of officers 'shaking hands' with penguins and they were referred to as the 'inhabitants of Marion'.<sup>17</sup> They were also most frequently depicted as actors in cartoons about the Islands (see figure 5.2). In his article on Marion Wildlife, Marsh pointed out that the penguins and the other avian 'new nationals need not fear their first overlords' as one of the first regulations made with regards to the islands was the protection of bird-life. This

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<sup>14</sup> The refrain of this song was: "Hardships, you Bastards/ You don't know what hardships are!" Song composed about the annexation by the Landing Party, passed to Captain Grindley by Warrant Officer S.A. Heroldt on the occasion of the *Transvaal* scuttling. Album of Captain Bob Grindley, STHM Miscellaneous. Passed to Captain Grindley by Warrant Officer S.A. Heroldt on the occasion of the *Transvaal* scuttling.

<sup>15</sup> "Annexing Marion Island," *Star* (20 January 1948).

<sup>16</sup> Sometimes, penguins were listed as 'passengers' upon return of the *Gamtoos* and the *Natal*. "S.A. Troops Return from Marion: Beards will have to go," *Cape Times* (25 March 1948). In 1957, a German zoo collector joined the relief to 'bring 'em back alive', meaning the penguins and seals. "He is off to Marion to bring 'em back alive," *Cape Argus* (27 April 1957); "S.A. plants going to Marion," *Cape Times* (27 April 1957). The penguin trade on Marion continued to well into the 1970s (Bruce Dreyer, personal communication, April 2009).

<sup>17</sup> *Die Burger* (20 January 1948). This was not just a South African phenomenon. It became quite a stock-photo for Antarctic flag-raising ceremonies. See T. Griffiths *Slicing the Silence* and B. Hains *The Ice and the Inland*.

entailed the switching off of ships' lights during night and refraining from the unnecessary killing of birds.<sup>18</sup>

The other, recurrent remark about these animals was their tameness. The animals did not co-evolve with humans on these uninhabited islands and early accounts noted the 'oddity' of the animals being unafraid of humans.<sup>19</sup> They were, for the most part, good, docile citizens.

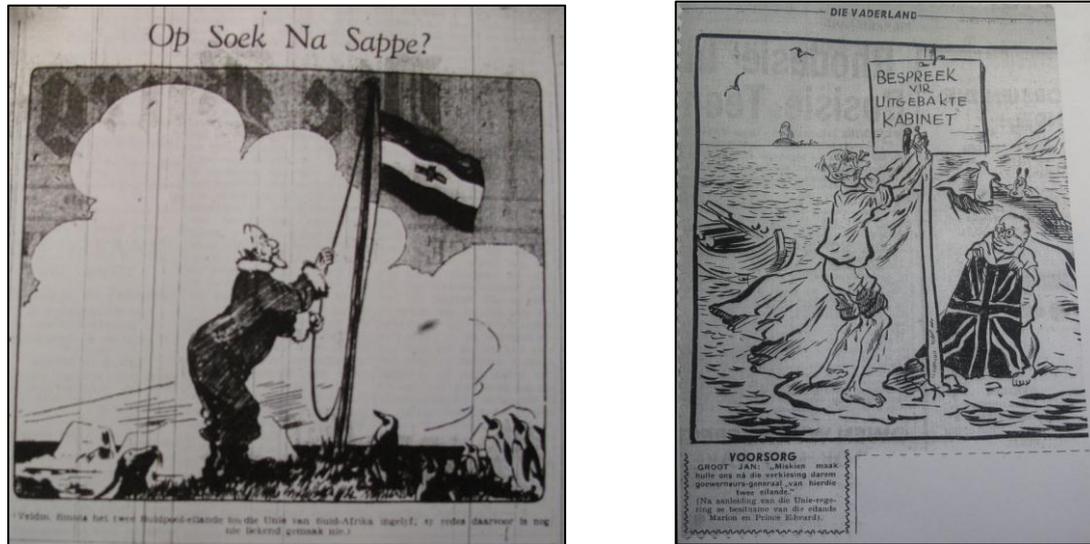


Figure 5. 1: The desolate nature of the Islands lent itself to incisive political commentary. The top cartoon's caption reads: "On the lookout for Sappe" (the nickname for United Party members). The caption on the bottom cartoon reads: "Big Jan: 'Maybe after the election they at least make us governors-general of these two islands.' (In reference to the Union's taking ownership of the islands Marion and Prince Edward.)"

Source: *Die Burger*, 5 January 1948 and DGAF 542/48/1 press cutting from *Die Vaderland*.

Nevertheless, the 'Wilderness' needed fiendish Indians.<sup>20</sup> And on Marion these came in the form of a skua gull. The skua gulls were quite literally treated as outlaws.<sup>21</sup> The men went everywhere armed with revolvers against 'these massive birds...reputed to hypnotise their prey.'<sup>22</sup> One of the settlement party said that the skuas did not 'take kindly to our invasion of

<sup>18</sup> Marsh, "Besieged by Birds: Marion Island Incident"; K. Sara, "Union's New Empire," *Spotlight* (27 February 1948). Grindley, "Marion Island." This was also confirmed by Kenneth Kockjoy who spent a year on the island from 1949-1950. Interview with Kenneth Kockjoy, Germiston (18 March 2010).

<sup>19</sup> J.A. Bennetts, "King Penguins Own Marion Island," *African Wildlife*, 2,3 (December 1948) Grindley, "Marion Island".

<sup>20</sup> David Day, *Conquest: How Societies Overwhelm Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Indeed, they were declared such by Captain Paul Dryden-Dymond of the *Natal*. Marsh, "Besieged by Birds."

<sup>22</sup> Sara, "Union's New Empire."

their domain' and soon the 'bodies of skua gulls shot down in attack' littered the settlement site.<sup>23</sup>



Figure 5.2: Marsh captioned this picture "A King penguin receives a friendly shake from fellow South Africans to mark its change-over to Union nationality."

*Source: J.H Marsh No Pathway Here (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1948)*

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<sup>23</sup> "New Isles' Giant Seals will make up Union's Oil deficiency: Skua Gulls make Mass Attacks on Settlers." *The Star* (31 January 1948). Marion Island is one of the breeding places for the Sub-Antarctic skua, *Catharacta Antarctica* sp. These birds, although not the largest can, when flying at full-speed, knock a grown man over. Personal communication, John Cooper (27 March 2011).

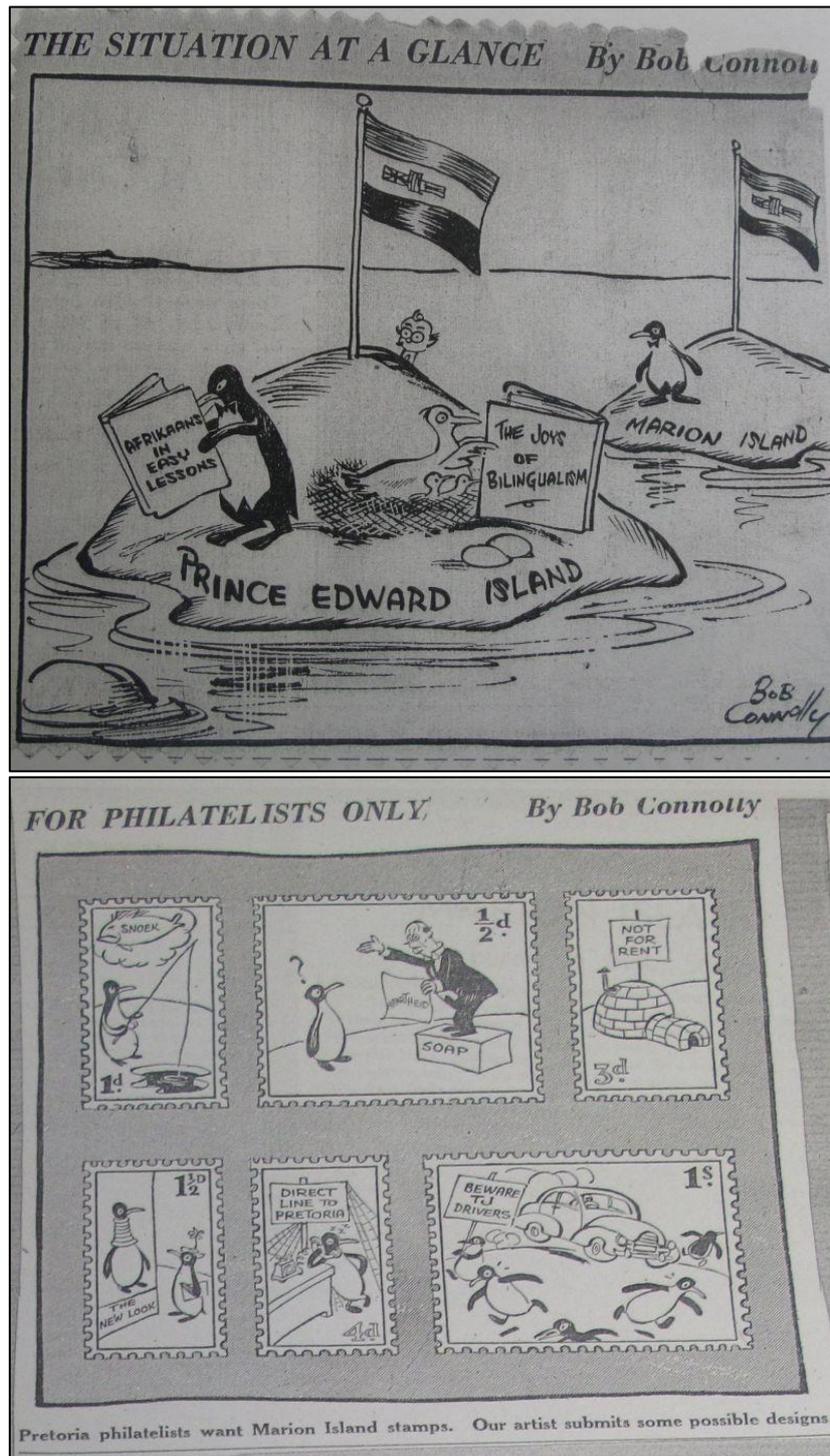


Figure 5.3: These cartoons draw on penguins as characters in enacting political issues of the time. This included regulations to enforce bilingualism (Afrikaans and English) in the civil service. The cartoon 'for philatelists only' also commented on more light-hearted issues, like drivers from the Transvaal and the pre-occupations of philatelists.

*From top left: Cutting from SANFDA DGAF 542/48/1 and cutting from SPRI MS 1531/15*

### ***Isolation, Foreignness, Uselessness?***

The adjectives most often used when describing the nature *and* the natural environment of Marion, denoted loneliness, desolation and distance. It was a ‘lonely island’,<sup>24</sup> ‘away from all civilisation’.<sup>25</sup> ‘To live on this windswept island’, one newspaper wrote, ‘roughly seven by five miles of treeless country, in which albatross, sea-lion and the penguin is man’s chief companion, more than mere physical resistance is required.’<sup>26</sup> Unlike warm, tropical and inhabited islands that were described as ‘exotic’, Marion Island was described in shades of darkness, wetness and cold. Grindley, for example described their first sighting of land as a ‘sort of dull anti-climax, out of a storm-tossed sea and under a black forbidding sky, dark and unfriendly land appeared through a parting in the mist shroud surrounding it.’<sup>27</sup> Although not everyone used such Brontësque language (for example, Lieutenant Bold called it ‘invigorating and healthy’ but even he anthropomorphised it as ‘capricious’<sup>28</sup>), descriptions of the weather were central in nearly all descriptive portrayals of the Islands. As for the landscape, the peat mires were described as one of the most treacherous natural elements on the Islands. It made walking a ‘painful and dangerous process’.<sup>29</sup> With the skuas, wind and bogs to contend with and the settlement not finished yet, men were forbidden to go more than four miles from their quarters.<sup>30</sup>

Wilderness, wastes, places not easily contained or understandable were sometimes given sexualised feminine qualities. Marsh’s description of Marion was illustrative of this:

Marion was a lovely picture. She rose, a jade jewel, out of the sea. Her lush green coat was fringed with the black lace of the cliffs and her heights draped in scintillating snow.... In comparison with the pyramidal appearance of Marion, with its cluster of nipples forming high peaks, Prince Edward was flat and unimpressive.<sup>31</sup>

A prominent scoria cone overlooking Transvaal Bay was also named ‘Junior’s Tit’ after a junior officer, Andrew MacMurray exclaimed on its ‘remarkable resemblance...to a female

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<sup>24</sup> Allan B Crawford, ‘Marion Island Visited,’ and ‘Lonely island life just suits Mr la Grange,’ *Cape Argus*, (6 April 1954).

<sup>25</sup> ‘Wind Is Worst Foe on Marion,’ *Daily News* (5 May 1952).

<sup>26</sup> ‘Relief Ship getting Ready to Sail for Marion Island,’ *Star* (August 1948).

<sup>27</sup> Grindley, ‘Marion Island.’

<sup>28</sup> ‘S.A. Troops Return from Marion.’

<sup>29</sup> ‘Life on Island is Good Except for Mice, Bogs and the Cold’ (May 1948) in SPRI 1531/15.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Bog danger on Marion,’ (16 March 1948), SPRI 1531/15.

<sup>31</sup> Marsh, *No Pathway Here*.

breast.’<sup>32</sup> (Officially it was named Junior’s Kop). One should not, however, over-emphasise the point – a black lava outcrop before one venture inland was called Pinnacle Rock officially, but Penis Rock by most people on the island.<sup>33</sup> Both Marsh’s description and the descriptive but informal name of Pinnacle Rock refer to very basic features of nature. However, describing the more impressive ‘feminine’ Marion Island as more alluring speaks to a kind of aesthetics of wilderness. ‘Penis Rock’ is rather the product of humour. Less incongruous is the fact that it is used as a way-point – a beacon from which directions are given – a phallic symbol showing the way.

The Island’s apparent uselessness and foreign nature was exploited by D.F. Malan, who was Prime Minister by the time that the Prince Edward Islands Bill came before parliament.

These islands do not contain any mineral wealth, as far as we know. There are practically no agricultural possibilities. There is no dense population on the islands – no human population anyway. We cannot look forward to extending our markets to that new territory close to the Union. Climatically it is certainly not suited as a health resort or holiday resort... The climate is cold – that is all we can say about the climate, except that the island is swept by very strong gales occasionally, it is windswept. There is only one temperature, and that is extremely cold...<sup>34</sup>

Although Malan also pointed out their strategic value, and the Bill was passed without much debate, it was clear that in terms of propaganda value, at least, the Islands’ most immediate use was in providing a punch line, as discussed in chapter three.

### ***Making the Islands a part of South Africa***

The Islands were, however, solely South African territory now. They had to be fitted in with its government. Although not the only determinant, this also meant that its environment had to be taken into account. Conservation, in the sense of regulating an environment in order to keep it ‘wild’, had a precedent as in spaces such as the Kruger National Park and the Hluhluwe Game Reserve,<sup>35</sup> but apart from the requests for the protection of birds, the initial reaction to the natural environment at the Prince Edward Islands was one of how it could be

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<sup>32</sup> Andrew McMurray, “How Junior’s Kop at Marion Island got its name- the full story,” Knysna, 5 February 1998, ALP, Private Collections, John Cooper.

<sup>33</sup> Personal Observation, Marion Island Relief Voyage, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> HANSARDS, 22 September 1948, 3040.

<sup>35</sup> Jane Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park* and Brooks “Images of ‘Wild Africa’, 220–240

made useful, how it could be incorporated into the bureaucracy and if there was a way in which it could be, if not self-sufficient, then at least materially productive.

This was reflected in the early struggles to find a department to house the Prince Edward Islands to a government Department. On a policy level, the Department of External Affairs made the executive decisions. In terms of the logistical aspects, the Department of Transport was the coordinating department, but the Department of Defence was also closely involved as their vessels and their officers were used. Lastly, the Department of Agriculture was the department with experience in 'island administration' as they took charge of the government guano islands. Their crew members provided the labour force, one of whom drowned at Marion Island.<sup>36</sup>

A year after annexation, enquiries were made to the superintendent for State Guano Islands, T L Kruger, if the Prince Edward Islands could not be attached to his department. Kruger, was 'not keen at all' to be 'burdened' with the islands. They were dangerous, far from South Africa and would probably not turn a profit. He agreed though that it might be more cost-effective for his department to run them as opposed to others, as they had the right equipment to serve the island.<sup>37</sup> He also made it clear, that to cover costs their only option would be hunting seals, as the high rainfall made Marion useless as a guano island. Moreover, the climate would increase the labour costs and the depreciation of the equipment would be high.<sup>38</sup>

The isolated nature of the islands – in terms of them being far from the Union as well as isolated in the sense that it was a very small community of people living in isolation from the wider world, was one of the reasons they also considered passing control of the Islands over to the Navy. Apart from the original purpose of the annexation being strategy and security, it was argued that within the military it would be easier to obtain 'men of the right temperament and character to pull together harmoniously and cheerfully under difficult and rigorous conditions and isolated from all social contacts.'<sup>39</sup> The Head of General Staff, however, felt

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<sup>36</sup> For more on Joseph Daniels see Lance van Sittert, "Antarctic History from Below: Joseph Daniels and the Annexation of Marion Island, 1923-1948," paper presented at the SCAR History Workshop, Stellenbosch, South Africa (26-30 July 2011).

<sup>37</sup> T.L Kruger, Super-Intendant: State Guano Islands to Secretary of Agriculture, Cape Town, 29 June 1949, SAB TBK G 15 vol. 32 20/28/1220, ALP, Private Collections, John Cooper and Lance van Sittert, "Antarctic History from Below."

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> "Control of Marion Island," 17 August 1951, SANFDA AG (3) 276/1.

that the military did not have enough manpower and that, in time of War, the Union Defence Force would self-evidently take over responsibility.<sup>40</sup>

Enquiries were also made into the possibility of establishing the Prince Edward Islands as an agricultural colony, focussing on sheep farming, potatoes and even forestry. A similar economy was run on Tristan da Cunha and the Falklands respectively.<sup>41</sup> Trees were taken to the island, ostensibly to be used as wind breaks, but also because of their aesthetic value. Making themselves at home also involved making the place more like home. A landscape without trees was just too foreign, and the trees were planted so as to form a ‘pretty lane’ to the Base.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Going wild – the animals on Marion Island***

As part of the effort to make the Islands more useful, the biologist of the Government Guano Islands, Bob Rand, was sent to Marion Island to investigate the fauna and flora and in particular to conduct a seal census, with a view of recommending exploitable species.<sup>43</sup> From his report, Rand seems to have been influenced by Charles Elton’s pioneering work on animal ecology, especially the approach of studying animal populations in relation to their environment.<sup>44</sup> He stressed the impact of exploitation in animal population numbers, noting that it would most likely not be feasible. Rand also gave consideration to the introduced species on the islands. He did not use the expression, ‘invasion’<sup>45</sup> but he delineated the potential impact of alien plants and animals on the island, clearly stating that experience on other islands has shown that ‘when exotic species are introduced, illness occurs and affects the endemic population adversely.’<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Head of General Staff, Control of Marion Island, 1951, SANDFA AG (3) 276/1.

<sup>41</sup> G.C.L Bertram, Scott Polar Research Institute to Acting Political Secretary, South Africa House, 9 January 1952, SAB BTS 1/96/2 vol. 2.

<sup>42</sup> Meteorological Office, Marion Island to Director, Weather Bureau, “Aanbevelings: Marion Eiland,” 19 May 1952, ALP, Private Collections, John Cooper and Interview with Johan Grobbelaar, Bloemfontein (23 March 2010). He was leader of second and third biological expeditions to Marion Island (1971/1972; 1972/1973). The trees that survived the wind never grew to any great height and were pulled out a couple of years later (Conversation with Valdon R. Smith (April 2009)).

<sup>43</sup> R “Bob” Rand, “Marion Island: Report from the biologist of the Government Guano Islands,” 30 July 1952, ALP, Private Collections, John Cooper. Bob Rand’s recommendations included advice on personnel management (including a request for coloured servants) and logistic operations. A peak was later named in Rand’s honour.

<sup>44</sup> Charles S. Elton, *Animal Ecology* (Sidgwick and Jackson: London, 1927).

<sup>45</sup> Elton’s book *The Ecology of Invasions by Animals and Plants* that launched the systematic study of biological invasions was published in 1958. (Charles S. Elton, *The Ecology of Invasions by Animals and Plants* (London: Methuen, 1958). It was immensely influential and remains so today

<sup>46</sup> R “Bob” Rand, “Marion Island: Report from the biologist of the Government Guano Islands,” 30 July 1952, ALP, Private Collections, John Cooper.

Rand devoted a considerable section to one such exotic domestic species, cats. Before humans introduced themselves as a permanent feature of the Marion Island ecosystem, they already directly influenced its environment when mice from sealing vessels and shipwrecks stayed behind on Marion Island.<sup>47</sup> This rodent population increased exponentially and spread over the island. The mice were especially ubiquitous around base, which was not only warmer but where the mice had a great supply of easily accessible food. Their appetite for human food and human hair were not appreciated by the base-staff. The first known female cat, ‘Ma’ was on the Island by 1949. She was accompanied by three toms, remembered as Soldaat, Kaptein and Junior.<sup>48</sup> The cats were brought down to prey on the mice, but found the burrowing birds, that had not co-evolved with mammalian predators, much easier prey. Rand noted that the cats were the origin of hygienic and other problems at the base.<sup>49</sup> He noted that by 1951, cats were present around Marion Island and that he already found four feral cats preying on the birds and suggested that the number of cats be rigidly controlled or they should be destroyed altogether.<sup>50</sup>

It was not only the cats he warned will become wild, but the humans too, were starting to fall victim to their remote surroundings. Commenting on sanitation at the station, he cautioned that unless personnel observed rigid rules of sanitation, the base surroundings will ‘steadily degenerate into an evil-smelling barnyard.’ He explained, ‘[d]omestic animals and an indifferent homo wander aimlessly through the houses, spilling all the offal of their various needs.’<sup>51</sup> In fact, most of his recommendations on the management of the station reflected a concern that the men became uncivilized on the Island. This he ascribed to the ‘sudden transition from the regimentation of an orderly life in the Union [that] contrasts severely with the cloistered existence on Marion where individuals are suddenly called upon to conduct their own affairs themselves.’<sup>52</sup> The station leader on Marion during the time of Rand’s visit also wrote a report that was revealing of what was considered the natural order of things at

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<sup>47</sup> J.P. Bloomer and M.N. Bester, “Control of feral cats on sub-Antarctic Marion Island, Indian Ocean,” *Biological Conservation* 60 (1992) 211-219.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with Kenneth Kockjoy, Germiston, (18 March 2010). Once on the island, the initial clowder was not left to their own devices much, being fed tuna and powdered milk.

<sup>49</sup> He mentioned, for instance that the cats defecate on the beds and furniture that one person kept nearly two dozen cats in his bedroom and that others despise them. R “Bob” Rand, “Marion Island: Report from the biologist of the Government Guano Islands,” 30 July 1952, ALP, Private Collections, John Cooper.

<sup>50</sup> Rudi J van Aarde, “Distribution and Density of the Feral House Cat *Felis Catus* on Marion Island,” *South African Journal of Antarctic Research* 9 (1979), 14.

<sup>51</sup> R “Bob” Rand, “Marion Island: Report from the biologist of the Government Guano Islands,” 30 July 1952, ALP, Private Collections, John Cooper.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

the time. He suggested, for instance, that they should be supplied with a hothouse, around hundred sheep and coloured domestic workers.<sup>53</sup>

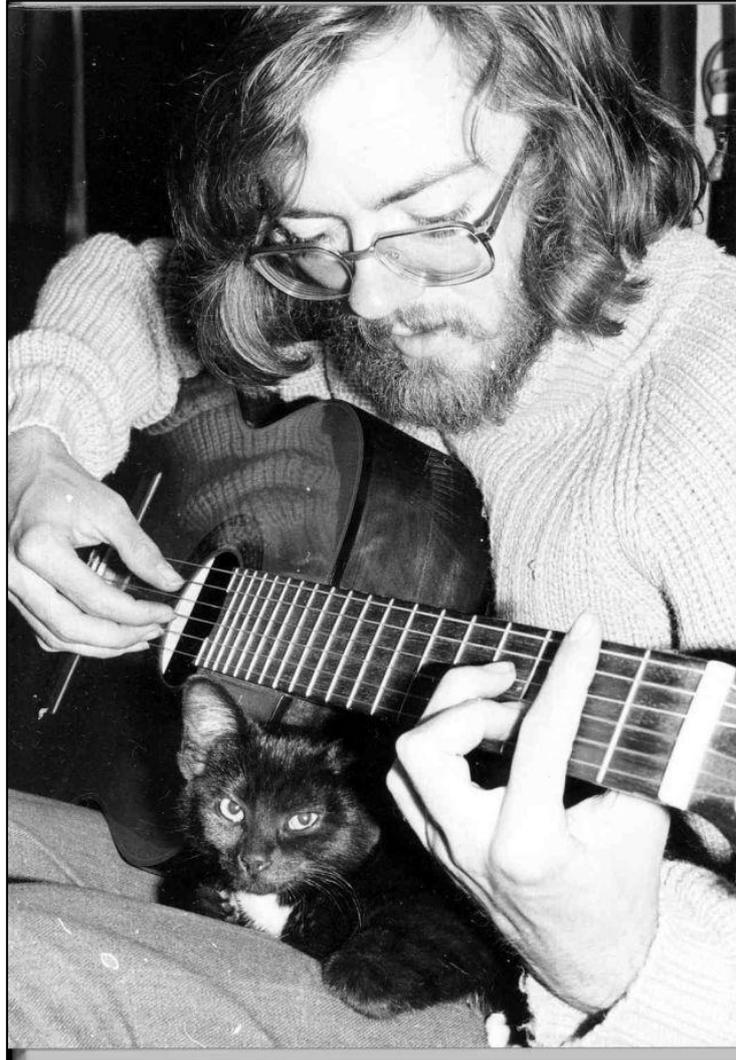


Figure 5.4: Some cats were pets. This picture was taken in 1973/4.

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<sup>53</sup> Meteorologist (probably J.J la Grange) to Director, Weather Bureau. "Aanbevelings: Marion-Eiland," 19 May 1952, ALP, Private Collections: John Cooper.

## From ‘just pure and simple a weather station’ to a ‘Marion school for young scientists’

### *Developing a scientific research programme on the Prince Edward Islands c.1957–1967*

Bob Rand’s report represented one of the first attempts from South Africa to take a scientific approach to their island possession, an applied scientific approach to turn nature into a natural resource with economic value. Rand strongly recommended further scientific study throughout his report, but ‘research’ done on the Island consisted mostly of ad-hoc studies by team members who conducted them as amateur hobbies.<sup>54</sup> The meteorological station’s work was mostly confined to weather observations. The potential role of science as a utilization of the Island and its natural environment started shifting from the synoptic and the leisurely towards a systematic and formalised science in the wake of the IGY of 1957/8 (see chapter three).<sup>55</sup> A scientific advisory committee, the Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research (SCAR), established in preparation for the IGY, included the Prince Edward Islands in its remit. Although Marion Island in itself did not play a significant role in the IGY (the weather observation routine was adapted to fit the meteorological programme of the IGY), the IGY focussed the attention of the Cold War world on the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic region. It provided part of the foundations on which the Antarctic Treaty, which entered into force in June 1961, was based. The Prince Edward Islands were not included in the Antarctic Treaty, which applied to the region south of the 60°S, a rather arbitrary geographical line meant to follow the Antarctic convergence. This Island group, along with other Sub-Antarctic Islands were, however, included under the rubric of SCAR whose area of interest roughly stretched to the sub-Antarctic convergence. Following the IGY, SCAR also became the scientific advisor for the Antarctic Treaty and carried some weight with the Treaty powers. Science was literally inscribed into the Treaty that governed Antarctica. The second article of the Treaty specifically dealt with science and many of the other articles also referred back to science (e.g. military presence will be limited to the logistic support of science).<sup>56</sup> This

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<sup>54</sup> Allan B. Crawford was a keen birdwatcher, for example, and published a tract in an Australian pamphlet on them. E.g. Allan B. Crawford, “The Birds of Marion Island, South Indian Ocean,” *The Emu* 42, 2 (May 1952). J.J. ‘Hannes’ la Grange published notes on seals in the Weather Bureau newsletters.

<sup>55</sup> See Aant Elzinga, “Through the Lens of the Polar Years: Changing Characteristics of Polar Research in Historical Perspective,” *Polar Record* 45, 253 (2009), 331-336.

<sup>56</sup> The second article specifically dealt with science while most of the other articles also referred back to science (e.g. military presence will be limited to the logistic support of science). Conference on Antarctica (1 December 1959) [www.ats.ac/documents/ats/treaty\\_original.pdf](http://www.ats.ac/documents/ats/treaty_original.pdf) (Accessed 10 May 2011).

presented scientists in South Africa curious about a unique and unstudied region, with an opportunity to *do science*.

Eduard Van Zinderen Bakker, sr., Professor of Biology at the University of the Orange Free State, was credited for taking the initiative to lobby the Department of Transport and the CSIR to launch a biological research programme on the Islands.<sup>57</sup> Van Zinderen Bakker was curious about the natural history of the Islands.<sup>58</sup> He convinced SASCAR that biological research on the Islands was viable and received a relatively large amount of funding (for the time) to launch an exploratory expedition to the Islands.<sup>59</sup>

Given that the prevailing trend up until that point was one of bureaucratic lethargy where the Islands were concerned, their being unexplored by science would probably not have been reason enough to be granted government funding in itself. Other factors also played a role. South Africa's research activities to the Island would have improved their standing at SCAR, and subsequently their prestige as a Treaty power would improve.<sup>60</sup> The SCAR annual meeting that took place in Cape Town in 1963 would have been a strong reminder of this.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, as Honorary Dutch Consul, Van Zinderen-Bakker had political influence and apparently personally knew a number of National Party politicians, including Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd, whose son, the volcanologist Willem Verwoerd also participated in Marion Island research.<sup>62</sup> The broader political environment did not automatically lead to the scientific exploration of the Islands, but rather because the circumstances were such, scientists with diplomatic and networking skills like Van Zinderen-Bakker possessed could pursue new scientific programmes.

Van Zinderen Bakker was astute enough to draw on the increasing nationalist tones infusing major scientific institutions such as the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). He managed to obtain funding and convince the recently-established SASCAR that biological

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<sup>57</sup> Eduard van Zinderen-Bakker's eponymous son was also involved with the Islands as a biologist. Interview with Johan Grobbelaar, Bloemfontein (11 March 2010) and Brian Huntley, Betty's Bay, (9 March 2011).

<sup>58</sup> E.M van Zinderen-Bakker, *Reminiscences of Biological Travels in Africa and to South Polar Islands* (Somerset West: E.M van Zinderen Bakker, 1993).

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Prof Wilhelm H Verwoerd, geologist on first biological expedition (1966/1967) (11 June 2010). E.M van Zinderen-Bakker, *Reminiscences of Biological Travels in Africa and to South Polar Islands* (Somerset West: E.M van Zinderen Bakker, 1993).

<sup>60</sup> Also see chapter four.

<sup>61</sup> Also see chapters three and four.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Johan Grobbelaar, Bloemfontein (9 March 2010) and Brian Huntley, "Dairy" (1965-1966), 46, ALP, Private Collections, Brian Huntley.

research was indeed viable and would add to South Africa's status at SCAR.<sup>63</sup> What ensured the continuance of this funding was his bureaucratic skills and the measurable success of the 'South African Biological and Geological Expedition, 1965–1966' in terms of research output.<sup>64</sup> It also added to South Africa's standing in the sub-Antarctic scientific world, where the French and the British already had traditions of scientific enquiry. With this expedition there was a shift from the Island being a strategically located weather station, to it being a strategically located natural laboratory, a fertile location for biological and geophysical research.

### **Science, the environment and the killer cats, 1962– c.1990**

The Van Zinderen Bakker Expedition can be seen as a turning point in the history of South African involvement with the Prince Edward Islands.<sup>65</sup> Several scientific initiatives, hosted at different universities around South Africa, developed from it.<sup>66</sup> One of the most well-known biological studies on Marion was the research on the introduced cats that Rand presaged would become a major problem.

At an international scientific conference in 1962, the French raised concern about the effects of humans and domestic animals on sub-Antarctic birds. It was followed by an appeal to governments with sub-Antarctic territories to recommend conservation measures on these Islands.<sup>67</sup> South Africa reacted by asking Van Zinderen Bakker to establish the impact that the domestic cats on Marion Island had on its avifauna.<sup>68</sup> Although they noticed that there were a number of cats scattered around the island, they were not yet considered to be causing 'undue pressure on the birds'.<sup>69</sup> In the decade that followed, the scientific research on the Islands gradually increased, including population studies on birds. The descendants of 'Ma'

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<sup>63</sup> Interview Wilhelm H Verwoerd, Stellenbosch (11 June 2010). Van Zinderen-Bakker, *Reminiscences of Biological Travels*.

<sup>64</sup> It became known as the 'Van Zinderen Bakker' expedition in Marion parlance.

<sup>65</sup> For more on the output of the expedition, see the encyclopaedic natural history and geological survey that was subsequently published. E.M van Zinderen-Bakker, Winterbottom, J.M. and Dyer, R.A. (ed.) *Marion and Prince Edward Islands. Report on the South African Biological and Geological Expedition 1965-1966* (Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1971).

<sup>66</sup> E.g. Zoological studies at the University of Pretoria, Biology and Limnology at the University of the Orange Free State; Ornithology at the University of Cape Town and Geophysics and Ichthyology at University of Rhodes. Some of these disciplines since traded institutional homes.

<sup>67</sup> Marthán N Bester, J.P Bloomer, R.J van Aarde, B.H. Erasmus. P.J.J. van Rensburg, J.D. Skinner; P.G. Powell and T.W. Naude, "A review of the successful eradication of feral cats from sub-Antarctic Marion Island, South Indian Ocean," *South African Journal of Wildlife Research* 32 (April 2002), 65.

<sup>68</sup> Bester et al. "A review of the successful eradication of feral cats," 65.

<sup>69</sup> Brian Huntley, "Dairy" (1965-1966), ALP, Private Collections, Brian Huntley.

also increased and became more adapted to their environment.<sup>70</sup> By 1976, they numbered around two thousand and were killing an estimated 450,000 burrowing petrels a year.<sup>71</sup> It was feared that Marion's feral felines could indelibly alter its ecosystem.

Leading South African scientists and men (they were only men) involved with the Island emphasised that theirs was a *scientific* approach. The initial phase of the research included a detailed study of the cats, their habitat and the interaction between the felines and their Island environment. At an early stage of the research strategies were already formulated on how a cat eradication programme would proceed. At the time, the scientists believed biological control to be the most feasible method and researchers commenced with serological tests. Experimenting with trapped cats, the feline panleucopaenia (enteritis) virus proved the most efficacious in targeting and killing the cats, although not for their complete annihilation.<sup>72</sup> As one of the scientists put it: 'the only way to eradicate the cats is to dynamite the island and sink it.'<sup>73</sup>

Although the biological cat eradication programme had ethical clearance from the South African veterinary service at Onderstepoort,<sup>74</sup> South African animal protection groups protested strongly against the use of feline enteritis. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and the Animal Welfare Society called the method 'brutal', 'cruel' and 'inhumane'. They included details in their press releases of the 'horrible and painful' death that the cats would suffer.<sup>75</sup> Whilst not criticising attempts to remove cats from Marion Island, they specifically questioned the scientific validity of their method. The SPCA chairman, Dr Michael Levien used well-known examples of scientific triumphs to confront the scientists: 'In a sophisticated scientific civilization,' Levien said, 'where man has been able to put a man on the moon and manufacture petrol from coal, one would expect to find a way of humanly euthanizing these animals.'<sup>76</sup> He planned to enquire from the Swiss

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<sup>70</sup> J.P. Bloomer, M.N. Bester, "Control of feral cats on sub-Antarctic Marion Island, Indian Ocean," *Biological Conservation* 60 (1992), 211.

<sup>71</sup> The official figure was 2139±290 Standard Error (SE). Rudi J van Aarde, "Distribution and density of the feral house cat *Felis catus* on Marion Island," *South African Journal of Antarctic Research*, 60 (1979), 14.

<sup>72</sup> Rudi J. van Aarde, S. Ferreira, T. Wassenaar and D.G. Erasmus, "With the cats away the mice may play," *South African Journal of Science* 92 (August 1996), 357.

<sup>73</sup> Hennie Erasmus, Chairperson of the Mammal Research Institute. Quoted in Jeremy Thorpe "Cat-astrophe!" *Pretoria News* (15 June 1978).

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Marthan Bester, Chairperson of the Mammal Research Institute at the University of Pretoria, Pretoria (2 March 2010). He was also the coordinator of the cat eradication programme.

<sup>75</sup> "Germ War on Island's Killer Cats Cruel, says SPCA Man," *Sunday Tribune* (3 September 1978); "Cruel cat-killers on Marion Island," *The Citizen* (10 December 1979); "Killing of cats on island 'brutal'," *Rand Daily Mail* (11 December 1979).

<sup>76</sup> "Cruel cat-killers on Marion Island," *The Citizen* (10 December 1979).

headquarters whether they could produce ‘scientific advice’ to solve the problem.<sup>77</sup> The scientists countered that they have tried alternatives and using the rhetoric they thought suited to the SPCA and the Animal Welfare Society, asked the public to ‘think how horrible it is for a bird to be savaged by a cat.’<sup>78</sup> This rhetoric that the scientists were cruel obviously struck a sensitive vein in the scientists themselves. After the programme was declared a success, the scientists involved in the cat eradication programme would remark in an academic journal that ‘this invasive and exotic predator was clearly jeopardizing the future of several defenceless bird species.’<sup>79</sup>

The cat eradication programme provides a useful turning point for tracing how human engagement with the idea of wilderness changed over time. Humans domesticated cats a few millennia ago, but they introduced cats to the island ecosystem only after they introduced themselves on a permanent basis. They were not part of the ‘primordial’ wild described by the visitors in the 1940s and 1950s. In captivity, under human control, the cats were considered ‘remarkably tame and eager for affection.’<sup>80</sup> The ‘killer cats’,<sup>81</sup> which were no longer behaving like the domestic cats that were first brought down and fed on tinned fish and powdered milk,<sup>82</sup> were feral and a pest to be eradicated before more avian species succumbed to them. The feral status of the cats and their de-anthropomorphisation were highlighted when Jack Russell terriers ‘scarcely 30 cm tall’ were brought to Marion. These ‘game little dogs’ were ‘pitted against the cats, the rugged island terrain and the vicious Marion Island weather.’ Although not very successful, they were praised for their ‘courage and tenacity’.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. One of the population control methods put forward by the SPCA as worthy of further investigation was the release of a number of vasectomised tomcats: ‘these toms, which are not neutered, would prevent procreation because their mating would interfere with the females’ internal sex organs and it would inhibit breeding. “Probe into cat-killing methods,” *The Cape Times* (12 December 1979).

<sup>78</sup> “Killing of cats on island ‘brutal’” *Rand Daily Mail*, (11 December 1979). Another comment read ‘apparently, people do not give one iota for the extermination of the birdlife.’ “Marion se Rot-Katte Voël Gevaar,” *Die Transvaler* (4 December 1979).

<sup>79</sup> Van Aarde et al, “With the cats away the mice may play,” 357.

<sup>80</sup> Thorpe, “Cat-astrophe!”

<sup>81</sup> “Germ War on Island’s Killer Cats Cruel”; Graham Ferreira, “Terrier’s Used on Island’s Killer Cats,” *Weekend Argus* (15 March 1980). One newspaper called the cats ‘wild, wilder than leopards in the Kruger Park.’ “Marion se Rot-Katte Voël Gevaar,” *Die Transvaler* (4 December 1979).

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Kenneth Kockjoy, Germiston (13 March 2010).

<sup>83</sup> Ferreira, “Terriers used on islands’ killer cats”; Gideon Joubert, “Van Alle Kante: Oorlog Teen Katte,” *Die Burger* (4 April 1980). In 1989, a German shepherd and a Labrador was tested on the Island, but were considered an unfeasible option. Bester, et al. “A review of the successful eradication of feral cats from sub-Antarctic Marion Island, South Indian Ocean,” 68.

The virus killed off about half the cat population but was eventually killed off by increasing immunity to the disease and the cold and wet Marion environment that affected the virus' ability to spread.<sup>84</sup> They decided to supplement the 'germ war' with hunting. After initial experimentation, a full scale hunting season commenced in 1986. Each season a group of about 16 'cat hunters' were brought to the island and working in groups of two traversed Marion, tracking down cats and shooting them with shotguns. Media shy, these men became legendary within the Marion Island community. By the 1980s, returning scientists and field assistants with long-running scientific projects<sup>85</sup> started to form a close-knit 'Islander' community and cat-hunting myths like the ghost of Lang Hans and the elusive cat, Harry Belafonte of Van den Boogaard River, proliferated.<sup>86</sup> The cat hunters were recruited from everywhere. Some were students who subsequently conducted research, others just finished school. When the cat hunting programme started, school-leaving white men were still conscripted in the army for two years. The programme coordinators had an agreement with the army that if a student went cat-hunting for a season, they will get the same number of months leave upon completion of their studies before being called up by the army. Some of the cat hunters had been combatants in Angola in the Border War, were coached in the scientific mandate behind their quest and were also asked to contribute to other programmes, especially conducting orca censuses.<sup>87</sup> It was also scientific study where the adverse conditions were used to forefront the masculine domination of man over nature. A cat-hunting instruction pamphlet ended with two slogans: 'Pain forms the character' and 'Happiness is a confirmed kill'.<sup>88</sup> The latter slogan was also found in another context, embraced by the readers of *Soldiers of Fortune* magazine, rumoured to be targeted at mercenaries.<sup>89</sup> The last cat is thought to have been killed in 1991.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Thorpe, "Cat-astrophe!"

<sup>85</sup> From the mid-1980s onwards, scientists and field assistants also stayed for the year and relief voyages took place annually.

<sup>86</sup> Lang Hans was a nocturnal visitor to Kildalkey, one of the Marion field huts. Interview with Marthan Bester, Pretoria, (2 March 2010). Miscellaneous informal interviews by author, Marion Island Relief, 2009.

<sup>87</sup> "Cat-hunter instruction booklet," probably compiled by MN Bester, c.1988, ALP, Private Collection, John Cooper.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> David Menconi, "Soldier's Last Stand," *Mother Jones* (November 1988), 52.

<sup>90</sup> Bester et al, "A review of the successful eradication of feral cats from sub-Antarctic Marion Island, South Indian Ocean," 68.



Figure 5.5: These two pictures of a cat hunter were illustrative of a mocking ‘sensitivity’, parodying the concerns of those with ethical objections (the picture in the left is the one used by the person in slide shows) and the spirit in which the hunting was done. The pose is similar to those adopted by Big Game hunters with their trophies.

*Photo: Andre Botha (cat hunter 1989), [www.antarcticlegacy.sun.ac.za](http://www.antarcticlegacy.sun.ac.za)*

## **Explosive issues: Missiles, airstrips and environmental controls**

Along with the control over the cats, other environmental control procedures, especially with regard to reducing the impact of alien invasive species, were introduced. Governments, scientists and interest groups increasingly prioritised during the 1970s and the 1980s, partly because of the growth of environmentalism worldwide, but also because the marine potential of the Southern Ocean came under scrutiny.<sup>91</sup> There were various motivations behind calls for conservation, including conservation to protect natural heritage and conservation as a means of resource management. For some scientists, the ‘pristine wilderness’ had to be

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<sup>91</sup> The Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Sources (CCMLAR) was one of the major undertakings to regulate conservation in the Southern Ocean. Placed on the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting Agenda in 1977, CCMLAR was signed in 1980 and entered into force on 7 April 1982. Like SCAR, CCMLARs scope includes sub-Antarctic Islands.

restored by the humans who disturbed it, but now the wilderness was a study site, a laboratory of which the environmental parameters should be known and where possible controlled. Marion Island was a good site for comparative pollution studies. Being far away from ‘civilization’ and busy shipping lanes, direct anthropogenic pollution was insignificant; so Marion provided a data base line.<sup>92</sup> When a slight but deliberate diesel spill was noticed off Marion Island, newspapers quoted scientists saying ‘the Island is supposed to be a nature reserve. It is a place where scientists can make undisturbed observations on birds and animals. No tourists or unauthorized people are ever allowed to land.’<sup>93</sup>

In October 1985 the directorate for Antarctica and the Islands moved to the Department of Environmental Affairs and Fisheries. This was a landmark in the recasting of the Prince Edward Islands as mainly a meteorological station, providing weather data to assist with aviation forecasting, to a sub-Antarctic research station where its unique environment was the *raison d’être*. In the following year the Department faced a controversy that again called into question the role played by (and use of) this isolated Island group with respect to mainland South Africa. On 28 December 1986 news broke in the London newspaper *The Observer* that South Africa is planning to build an airstrip on Marion Island.<sup>94</sup> Citing Frank Barnaby, a previous director of the Stockholm Peace Institute, *The Observer* speculated that South Africa wanted to use the airstrip to develop a nuclear test site with Israeli help and the knowledge of the USA.<sup>95</sup> The article also referred to rumours of covert Israeli and South African military visits to the Island and the so-called ‘Vela’ incident of 1979.<sup>96</sup> It was

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<sup>92</sup> Graham Ferreira, ‘Dumped Diesel Kills Penguins,’ *The Argus* (1 April 1981); ‘Hundreds of Penguins Killed by Diesel Oil,’ *The Daily News* (2 April 1981); Graham Ferreira, ‘Call for Inquiry into Oil at Marion Island,’ *The Argus* (2 April 1981).

<sup>93</sup> Ferreira, ‘Dumped Diesel Kills Penguins.’

<sup>94</sup> The news was published in *The Observer* under the heading ‘South Africa’s Island bombshell.’ ‘SA mum on ‘nuke testing at Marion,’ (29 December 1986).

<sup>95</sup> ‘Nuke link to Island Runway Plan?’ *The Cape Times* (29 December 1986); ‘SA ‘wil wapens toets’ by Marion,’ *Die Burger* (29 December 1986); ‘SA plans Marion Island airstrip: row likely,’ *The Citizen* (29 December 1986).

<sup>96</sup> In 1984, helicopter sorties of the South African Defence Force made several flights between the *SA Agulhas* and the Island, but did not interact with the team. Nigel Adams, team member, 1984, personal communication (31 May 2011). It could not be confirmed that Israeli military were also present, although reliable second-hand accounts have confirmed that this was the case. The Vela incident refers to a ‘double-flash’, indicative of a nuclear test, which the American surveillance satellite VELA 6911 picked up in the South Atlantic on 22 September 1979. The United States suspected that it was a joint South African – Israeli exercise. (Two years earlier, Soviet surveillance satellites picked up that South Africa was planning an underground nuclear explosion in the Kalahari and the South Africans quickly shut the site down without conducting a test). After an investigation into the ‘double flash’, an investigation that included the handover of ionospheric data from Marion Island to Washington DC, it was concluded that although South Africa probably did not have the technical capability to launch a nuclear warhead at the time, Israel probably had. The issue remained unresolved though, and conspiracy theories around it still exist. See Sasha Polakow-

believed that the anti-Apartheid lobby as well as environmentalists would raise a storm of protests. As an aside, it was mentioned that the Deputy Director of the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) would be involved in assessing the environmental impact of the airstrip.<sup>97</sup>

At first the South African government declined to comment, with Minister Wiley saying that he knew nothing about it.<sup>98</sup> The very next day, however, Wiley confirmed that an airstrip had been considered already when the Islands were still the responsibility of the Department of Transport. According to him, a key factor was the cost of medical evacuations, of which there were four in the preceding four years.<sup>99</sup> Another reason was that control over the fishing zones around Marion had to be upgraded. He also justified the plan that the environmental impact assessment would be crucial in determining whether the airstrip will be built.<sup>100</sup>

Initially, reactions amongst the public and the press focussed exclusively on the speculation that there were more sinister reasons, political and nuclear, behind South Africa's plans. A *Weekend Argus* editorial remarked that '[i]t is a revealing reflection of the Government's belligerent image and the suspicion which its every action seems to elicit, that such menacing constructions should be placed on the Marion Island study.'<sup>101</sup> This and other editorials also pointed out the opaqueness of South Africa's nuclear policy, the 'enigmatic silence', elicited the kind of suspicious international reactions to the plans and were probably as good a deterrent as the actual weapons, and much cheaper.<sup>102</sup> Others pointed out that it was highly unlikely that South Africa would choose Marion to conduct nuclear tests: 'It would be silly for them to go so far south to explode a device. It would draw attention to them...and they must want to keep friends with other countries in the Antarctic. Anyone who starts exploding bombs down there will not be viewed too well by others.'<sup>103</sup> The strategic linkages between the sub-Antarctic islands and Antarctica were further seen as a possible motivation for South

Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance: Israel's Secret Relationship with Apartheid South Africa* (Cape Town: Jacana, 2010) for a full account.

<sup>97</sup> "Nuke link to Island Runway Plan?"

<sup>98</sup> Anon., "SA 'Wil Wapens Toets' by Marion," *Die Burger* (29 December 1986); "Swye oor Lughawe by Marion," *Die Burger* (29 December 1986); "SA mum on 'nuke testing at Marion.'"

<sup>99</sup> "Wiley reageer op kern-bewerings: Landingsstrook vir Marion ondersoek," *Die Burger* (30 December 1986); "Marion Island airstrip plans under consideration, Minister concedes," *The Natal Witness* (30 December 1986). The most well-known evacuation was that of Graham Clarke in July 1984. He slipped into a coma with suspected meningitis. "Medicine drop for Marion researcher," *The Cape Times* (12 July 1984); "Copter picks up ill team leader in bad weather," *Daily Mail* (14 July 1984).

<sup>100</sup> "Wiley reageer op kern-bewerings."; "Marion Island airstrip plans under consideration," "UK to probe report on Marion Island Airstrip."

<sup>101</sup> Editorial, "An Island Fantasy," *Weekend Argus* (3 January 1987).

<sup>102</sup> Editorial, "Study it First," *Business Day* (31 December 1986); Editorial, "An Island Fantasy"; Editorial, "Nuclear Poker," *The Natal Mercury* (5 January 1987).

<sup>103</sup> "Test Site Idea Disputed," *Business Day* (31 December 1986).

Africa's proposal.<sup>104</sup> The Antarctic Treaty was due for review in 1991 and the proposal also came as the tense negotiations were taking place for an Antarctic Minerals Regime (see chapter four).<sup>105</sup> Despite Wiley's efforts to emphasise that the continuance of such a plan will be subjected to an environmental impact assessment, very little of the public commentary focussed on the potential havoc an airstrip could wreck on sub-Antarctic ecosystems. The upper-class British magazine *Country Life* did, however, use the potential environmental impact to convey a point about one of their causes, turning Antarctica into a World Park. They noted that although Marion could 'hardly be called a wilderness', South Africa closely monitored its wildlife. Nevertheless, they might choose to use an airstrip as a stepping stone to the exploitation of Antarctic minerals. 'If nothing less,' the editorial continued, 'this threat focuses the attention on the fact that the future of the world's last unspoilt continent is still in the balance.'<sup>106</sup>

In addition to commenting on the negative impact that the construction of an emergency landing facility would have on the Marion Island Environment, the Environmental Impact Assessment committee made several recommendations relating to the logistical and project management of the construction, should it proceed. It also included a cost/benefit analysis. The committee did not, however, comment on the strategic aspects of the airstrip apart from those specifically pertaining to science. The report gave detailed reasons why the particular environment of Marion Island lent itself to important biological studies. Prominent scientists like Valdon Smith concurred: 'SA has a very proud record of conservation down there – probably better than any other country and it has a body of sub-Antarctic knowledge equalled only by the British. Now we are suddenly turning around.'<sup>107</sup>

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) put great emphasis on the very high risk of invasive species and the difficulty of controlling this. Importantly, they were especially concerned about Prince Edward Island, where there were very few alien species and no mice.

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<sup>104</sup> "Marion Island no Nuke Site – strategist," *The Citizen* (31 December 1986); "Test Site Idea Disputed." France, who at the time was building an airfield at Dumont d'Urville in east Antarctica, was suspected of having a similar motive. W.R.P Bourne, "Marion Island Airfield," *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 18,6 (June 1987), 262.

<sup>105</sup> The Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities (CRAMRA). The convention was signed in 1989 but never entered into force. It was renegotiated and ended up as the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (the Protocol) that put a ban on mining, codifying the option to re-open the issue in 2048. Kees Bastmeijer, *The Antarctic Environmental Protocol and Its Domestic Legal Implementation*, International Environmental Law and Policy Series (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2003).

<sup>106</sup> "Putting Marion Into Perspective," *Country Life* (15 January 1987).

<sup>107</sup> John Yeld, "Marion airstrip 'disaster,'" *The Argus* (27 February 1987).

Indeed, the first reason the Panel listed for recommending unanimously that the construction not be undertaken was ‘the paramount importance of maintaining the Prince Edward Islands in their present near pristine condition.’<sup>108</sup> When it was announced that the government had abandoned the plans for an airstrip, this aspect was also underlined by the editorial in the *Eastern Province Herald* read: ‘...Marion Island has given relays of South African researchers of working in a laboratory of nature unspoilt by man. But it is a fragile laboratory, and there must be widespread relief today that the Government has abandoned its proposal to build a landing strip there.’<sup>109</sup>

The EIA had some ramifications for how the islands were managed, in that environmental protection was foregrounded above all else. The report showed that the Prince Edward Islands environment were not protected as such by domestic legislation<sup>110</sup> but Antarctic Treaty conventions such as the ‘Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora’ (1964) and the ‘Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Seals’ (1972) were observed voluntarily. The EIA provided impetus to a move to implement a Code of Conduct for the Environmental Protection of the Prince Edward Islands. With the declaration of the Prince Edward Islands as a Special Nature Reserve in 1995, their environmental exclusivity was finally codified. A statement accompanying the announcement read: ‘Like many remote oceanic islands, the Prince Edward Islands exhibit a rare potential for the study of ecological processes, the monitoring of ecological change and the preservation of biological diversity.’<sup>111</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter sought to trace changes over time in how humans perceived of and dealt with the natural environment of uninhabited, isolated Island. Specifically, it looked at South Africa’s Prince Edward Islands. Initially, they tried to make the Islands economically viable and useful. As scientific interest in the natural environment of the Islands increased, perceptions

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<sup>108</sup> Gerhard Heymann et al, “Environmental Impact Assessment of a Proposed Emergency Landing Facility.” Minister Wiley committed suicide before the report was finished and was replaced by Gert J. Kotze who accepted the recommendation that they should not proceed.

<sup>109</sup> “Marion decision a great relief,” *Eastern Province Herald* (16 May 1987). The Wildlife Society of Southern Africa also mentioned the pristineness of the Islands in their press statement commending the Minister. “Wildlife Society thanks Minister,” *The Citizen* (14 May 1987).

<sup>110</sup> Limited protection was afforded most species of seabirds and seals on the Islands through the Sea Birds and Seals Protection Act of 1973.

<sup>111</sup> “Special plans for two SA islands,” *The Citizen* (5 August 1995); “SA Islands to be Nature Reserves,” *Cape Times* (8 August 1995).

of the Islands' value changed. The cat-hunting programme illustrated how the South Africans started to systematically control what was essentially their impact on the Island environment. The cat eradication was very much an Island affair, and the scientists involved received much recognition for it amongst their sub-Antarctic peers, but not necessarily from the broader South African scientific and political establishment. The controversy over the proposed airfield took place within the wider world, the global context of nuclear proliferation, dwindling mineral resources and environmentalism. In order to understand the ecologies of that world better, the Island world had to be kept as free as possible from its species and pollutants.

The EIA on the proposed airfield noted that on the Prince Edward Islands the 'human population is small and non-breeding.'<sup>112</sup> Yet, humans were present everywhere in this history. Perhaps extreme places of 'weird desolation' like the Prince Edward Islands offer environmental historians the opportunity not only to study the interactions between humans and the natural environment but also to more easily locate humans *as part of the natural environment*.

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<sup>112</sup> Gerhard Heymann et.al. "Environmental Impact Assessment," 41.

## Chapter 6

# Sanctioned science and South Africa's Antarcticans, c.1950 – c.1996

### Introduction

Social history has called for history to be studied 'from the bottom up.' This chapter asks what such a history from the bottom of the world might look like? Taking social history's mandate seriously requires dissecting the conventional narrative of who went to Antarctica and why. Being in Antarctica required capital and technological sophistication. If Antarctica is conceptualised as though it were a state, it certainly appears to be a developed one. In Antarctica there is no unemployment,<sup>1</sup> there is no indigence,<sup>2</sup> and the crime rate is negligible.<sup>3</sup> The air is the cleanest in the world. Medical care and literacy are universal. The cost of living is possibly the highest in the world, but wholly subsidised by government. Antarctica seems a wholly elite space – gazed upon only by a privileged few, a place whose history can be unashamedly about the ubiquitous 'dead white men.'

As discussed in the previous chapters, South Africa's Antarctic history was broadly the history of State and Policy with capital letters: where Science was alluded to it tended to be

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<sup>1</sup> In *Big Dead Place*, Nicholas Johnson's irreverent account of life on McMurdo, he described how fired employees are flown out as soon as possible. On SANAE too, people had to either finish their contract, or they were evacuated at the earliest possible moment if the working relationship proved untenable. Nicholas Johnson, *Big Dead Place: Inside the Strange and Menacing World of Antarctica* (Los Angeles, CA: Feral House, 2005). On the Islands these evacuations can take place throughout the year. On Antarctica one had to wait for summer. At least one such work-related evacuation from SANAE took place in recent years. Interview with Gert Benade, Potchefstroom, (9 September 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Of course, some stations are far more luxurious than others, usually reflecting the wealth of the mainland. The German station, Neumayer II is, for example, much better equipped with higher quality stock than the South African SANAE IV. In fact, redundant German stock, like some of the furniture used during base construction, have been donated to charities in South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> To date, there have been two alleged Antarctic murders, neither leading to a conviction. The more mythic of the two involved an axe and a chess game on a Soviet station in the 1980s. According to some sources, this led the Soviets to ban cosmonauts from playing chess in space. The second, for which there is much more of a paper trail and that was the subject of an actual investigation, involved an astrophysicist who died of poison at the American Scott-Amundsen (South Pole) station. There has been at least two 'medical evacuations' from South African bases after team members became threatening. Two people have also been murdered on the SA Agulhas, on the Gough run, the first on its maiden voyage in 1978 and again in 2004. Although both cases had several witnesses to the murders, the first murderer, disappeared overboard and the second case was dropped on a technicality. Bryan Burrough, 'Polar Privation: Antarctic Life Proves Hard Even for Those Who Love their Work,' *The Wallstreet Journal* (12 October 1985); Paul Chapman, 'Death "may be first South Pole murder,"' *The Telegraph* (14 December 2006); Interview, Mogamat Isaacs, SA Agulhas, (February 2011). and Fouzia van der Fort, 'SA Agulhas murder charges withdrawn,' *Cape Argus* (7 April 2009).

of the abstract, uninterrogated capital ‘S’ sort. Indeed, Science was an ill-defined concept but carried a well-defined authority. As seen in chapters two to four, ‘Science’ was mainly perceived as a thing that ‘scientists’ (very clever, middle-class, ambitious, white men) did. Chapters one and two also showed that there were a few powerful individuals – civil servants, scientists and scientist-bureaucrats – who wielded influence over policy. Some of these men visited Antarctica; an even smaller number spent a winter. Most South Africans who lived in Antarctica did not reach these influential positions, nor sought to do so. The image of Antarctica as the historical home of a few elite scientists is false. Indeed, most South Africans who spent a considerable amount of time in Antarctica were not even scientists, but rather engineers, radio-operators, technicians, doctors and construction workers.<sup>4</sup> South Africa’s twentieth century history is steeped in the politics of race and this adds an extra dimension to the social and post-colonial history of South Africa in Antarctica.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter contains two sections. Firstly, it closely examines the changing roles of science in the history of South Africa’s involvement with Antarctica, which has been a core theme throughout this dissertation. Secondly, it offers a reconnaissance into the history of South Africa’s Antarctic ‘communities’, specifically those that overwintered in the name of science. Drawing on studies of masculinities, the second section of the chapter will draw on three different sites, textual (published literature), ethnographic sites (interviews and artefacts) and everyday sites (informal observations) to consider those who have been normalised as the ‘ice-world pioneers.’<sup>6</sup> By taking into account aspects of gender and race, this chapter seeks to make some inroads into dissecting the historical construction of the image of the Antarctic research station as a place inhabited by alpha men.

## Science and South Africa’s National Antarctic Programme

In December 1960, the *Rand Daily Mail* announced that South Africa’s scientists were set to ‘Invade the Antarctic,’ deploying the militaristic language used throughout the immediate

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<sup>4</sup> On the Prince Edward Islands in late 1940s and early 1950s, the team also included labourers and chefs. This chapter focusses on Antarctica, although the society described had been for a large part filled with the same actors.

<sup>5</sup> Klaus Dodds illustrated his call for a post-colonial history of Antarctica with a variety of articles, of which one of the most interesting was a collaboration with Kathryn Yusoff on Pakeha and Maori relationships with Antarctica. Kathryn Yusoff and Klaus Dodds, “Settlement and unsettlement in Aotearoa/New Zealand,” *Polar Record* 41, 217 (2005): 144-155. On Antarctica and white New Zealand identity within empire also see Klaus Dodds, “The Great Trek: New Zealand and the British/ Commonwealth 1955-58 Trans-Antarctic Expedition,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 33,1 (January 2005): 93-114.

<sup>6</sup> Maureen P. Hogan and Timothy Pursell, “The ‘Real Alaskan’: Nostalgia and Rural Masculinity in the ‘Last Frontier,’” *Men and Masculinities* 11 (October 2008), 65.

post-War era and the IGY, describing the continent as enemy – or at least hostile – territory because it was unknown.<sup>7</sup> Two decades later, as this section will show, newspapers mobilised martial metaphors again, but this time Antarctica was not the enemy but the victim, to be ‘saved’ from the assault of the mining industry.<sup>8</sup> By 1993, in the run up to the first democratic election in South Africa, some scientists and policy-makers expressed a new uncertainty about the identity and meaning of the continent. Some even wondered whether a scientific programme on Antarctica should be continued in a ‘new South Africa.’<sup>9</sup>

The focus here is on science, scientists and those who supported science. It is, however, not primarily a history of science like G.E Fogg’s comprehensive (and Eurocentric) account of the various scientific disciplines in Antarctica.<sup>10</sup> Nor will this chapter attempt to address questions of scientific revolutions or processes in Antarctica or competition between different scientific disciplines, although there is much scope for this kind of history of science.<sup>11</sup> Rather, it looks at the broader played by ‘Science’ as Antarctic currency in the twentieth century.

The overt role of science in South Africa’s involvement in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic was made explicit in government memoranda. These memoranda should, however, not be

<sup>7</sup> “SA Scientists to ‘Invade’ the Antarctic,” *Rand Daily Mail* (5 December 1960).

<sup>8</sup> “Antarctica threatened,” *The Daily News* (8 April 1988); “Maatreëls gevra om Antarktika te beskerm,” *Beeld* (9 October 1989); “World Park or treasure chest?” *The Star* (3 December 1990); “SA ‘among last predators of Antarctic,’” *The Star* (25 April 1991); “Save Antarctica”; Margot Hornblower, “The great scientific laboratory: To exploit or preserve?” *The Star* (23 March 1981).

<sup>9</sup> Discussed in chapter four. The quotes used here were from “SA kan Suidpool verlaat,” *Die Burger* (25 October 1993). The paper was reporting on a speech made by Dr Mike Lucas, of the Zoology Department of the University of Cape Town.

<sup>10</sup> That Asian and Latin American scientific endeavours went largely unaddressed could be explained by a language barrier, or the fact that, as Howkins pointed out, countries such as Chile subtly challenged the British Antarctic epistemology – that science was the only way of ‘knowing’ Antarctica. Adrian Howkins, “Frozen Empires: A History of the Antarctic Sovereignty Dispute Between Britain, Argentina, and Chile, 1939-1959” (PhD dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, 2008), 115. That the Latin American world was side-lined without any reflection on the fact that it has been side-lined, should not be surprising considering that the foreword to Fogg’s book was by Margaret Thatcher. G.E Fogg, *A History of Antarctic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). A more self-aware and readable account can be found in D.H Walton and C.S.M. Doake, eds, *Antarctic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Chapter 4 in *Antarctic Science* specifically deal with science and politics.

<sup>11</sup> There was, for instance, a clear shift in the 1980s from physics towards biology, due to a variety of factors including scientific leadership and funding priorities. Interviews with Rudi van Aarde, Pretoria, (June 2011) and Johan Grobbelaar, Bloemfontein, (23 March 2010). Under the auspices of the Antarctic Legacy Project and the DST-NRF Centre for Invasion Biology, bibliometric and sociological studies of South Africa’s Antarctic and sub-Antarctic research activities are currently under way. (Heidi Prozesky, personal communication, 28 August 2011) and Sean Beckett and Heidi Prozesky, “Hegemonic definitions from the “North”: environmental concern as a western construct and its applicability to the South African and Antarctic context.” Paper presented at the Interdisciplinary Workshop, *Exploring linkages between environmental management and value systems – the case of Antarctica*, Christchurch, New Zealand (5 December 2011).

read at face-value. The final product was the result of a number of drafts circulated among the different stakeholders, including scientists, diplomats and lawyers. Ultimately, what these stakeholders considered the most politically persuasive arguments triumphed in the final versions. Although political expediency was obviously not the only factor that shaped Antarctic research programmes, scientists were aware of these politically useful goals, and tailored their research proposals accordingly.<sup>12</sup> Thus South Africa's Antarctic policies emphasised the utility of science in Antarctica at times of fiscal stringency and when the political usefulness of Antarctica was less clear. During the 1920s until the mid-1950s, individuals within the scientific community pressed for government support to conduct research in Antarctica by relying on more abstract arguments of international prestige and participating in a greater 'commonwealth of letters'. These proposals were internationalist in ideology and practice, from Jan Smuts' 1925 plea for the 'reunion of the scattered members of the ancient mother continent of Gondwana land'<sup>13</sup> to the Geological Society of South Africa's 1944 proposal for an International Polar Year, as shown in chapters one and two. The successive governments of the inter-war period and its immediate aftermath had neither the capital, nor the political will to send research expeditions south.<sup>14</sup> Smuts, the self-described scientist-statesman, was interested, as chapter one showed, but his aspirations primarily aimed at southern Africa in relation to the empire to its north. The primary reasons for the establishment of meteorological stations on Tristan da Cunha (1942) and the Prince Edward Islands (1948) were military-strategic and 'science' was not used as a justification, as chapter two explained.<sup>15</sup> Scientific interest in these islands – initiated by scientists as opposed to solicited by politicians – was welcomed a decade later in the late-1950s and 1960s when linked to broader southern ocean geopolitics. T.E.W Schumann, as director of the South African Weather Bureau and Allan Crawford, Cape Town's Port Meteorologist, managed to convince the National Party government of the importance of continuing these stations and looking into establishing new ones on Bouvet (1955) and Gough Island (1956) by pointing out the practical applications of weather forecasting. In the case of Gough Island, this was

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<sup>12</sup> Other factors included, for example, strong leadership from individuals at research institutions (for example Rudi van Aarde and Marthàn Bester at the Mammal Research Institute in Pretoria or Steven Chown and Valdon Smith at the Centre for Invasion Biology at Stellenbosch University) or chance occurrences, like the increase in volcanology research after the volcanic eruption in 1981. There is definitely scope for sustained research into South Africa's Antarctic scientists using Bruno Latour's Actor-Network theory or the sociological approach of David Hull's in *Science as Process: An evolutionary account of science* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> "Report of the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting for the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, Being Volume XXII of the South African Journal of Science," (Johannesburg: 1925).

<sup>14</sup> Chapter one.

<sup>15</sup> Chapter two.

further bolstered by strategic considerations.<sup>16</sup> Against the Cold War backdrop of the IGY and the Antarctic Treaty, memoranda during the late 1950s and 1960s focussed less on the domestic application of science and detailed justification for the specific sciences was not deemed necessary.<sup>17</sup> In terms of Antarctic and sub-Antarctic science, South African scientists were not, as John Krige maintained about their north Atlantic counterparts, ‘wary of being enrolled in the foreign entanglements of their governments.’<sup>18</sup> Coming from a smaller, less affluent country, South Africa’s scientists realised earlier, during WWII, that ‘the international arena provided them with additional resources while enhancing their scientific authority and social capital.’<sup>19</sup>

Sanctions against South Africa increased following the UN resolution of 1962 calling for voluntary embargoes against South Africa. During this time access to a multi-lateral platform provided by the ATS played an increasingly important role in encouraging scientific activity, as did the resource debates from the late 1960s (an economic growth period in South Africa)<sup>20</sup> to the early 1980s.<sup>21</sup> As the domestic economic and political crisis deepened in South Africa during successive states of emergency from 1985 onward, scientists could no longer rely only on vague arguments about a multi-lateral platform, and they thus adapted to foregrounding arguments about resource exploitation.<sup>22</sup> The change in emphasis – towards Antarctica as a global commons in the sense of it being not only an environmental resource, but an environmentally unique place that somehow inherently warranted conservation, was not unique to South Africa. The chapter on ‘managing the commons’ in the Brundtland report of 1987 included Antarctica, and explicitly linked science with sustainable development.<sup>23</sup> In terms of oceans, outer space and the Antarctic the report stated that: ‘traditional forms of national sovereignty are increasingly challenged by the realities of ecological and economic interdependence ... nowhere is this more true than in shared ecosystems...’<sup>24</sup> The polarity of the late Cold War world was rapidly disintegrating during

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<sup>16</sup> See chapter three.

<sup>17</sup> Chapters three and four.

<sup>18</sup> John Krige and Kai-Henrik Bath “Introduction: Science, Technology and International Affairs” *Osiris* 21,1, Global Power Knowledge: Science and Technology in International Affairs (2006),5.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Cape Town: Tafelberg and Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, [2003], 2009), 539 -541.

<sup>21</sup> Chapter four.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Libby Robin, ‘New Science for Sustainability in an Ancient Land,’ Sverker Sörlin and Paul Warde (eds) *Nature’s End* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 192.

<sup>24</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development, “Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future”[Chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland], (1987), 216.

the late 1980s, the information revolution was gaining pace. By the 1980s, the idea of fragility of the earth as a whole, visually encoded in the ‘blue marble’ picture taken by NASA astronauts in the 1970s increased awareness of humankind’s *planetary* presence.<sup>25</sup>

By 1990, there were serious doubts about whether the costs incurred by South Africa’s Antarctic programme were warranted, especially in light of the fact that the base on Antarctica was becoming uninhabitable and needed to be replaced. Furthermore, it was becoming clear that South Africa was heading for a regime change (even though the extent of the change was still unknown). In 1990, the Department of Environmental Affairs applied for additional funding for South Africa’s Antarctic activities, arguing that much of the programme (including most scientific aspects) did not fall strictly within their line-functions and they had insufficient funds for it. Subsequently, a cabinet memorandum was drawn up by the scientific advisory board to comment on the scientific aspects of South Africa’s involvement in Antarctica to supplement the political justifications. The board concluded that the high additional costs of South Africa’s Antarctic programme (not least of which was the need for a new Antarctic base) could not be justified on purely ‘scientific grounds’.<sup>26</sup> If there was a political need for an Antarctic presence, however, this could only be facilitated by continuing with the Antarctic programme. The ball was thus in the court of the politicians. Science, according to the memorandum, was useful for three reasons: to maintain South Africa’s status within the ATS, because of the direct benefits of international scientific collaboration and because the Marion Island and Gough Island stations needed to be maintained as meteorological stations regardless of the scientific programmes. These costs were integrated with the costs of scientific activity.<sup>27</sup> The memorandum contained a list of the advantages of scientific research in Antarctica, clearly spelling out how research conducted there could be applied in South Africa. They motivated their on-going involvement with strictly utilitarian arguments: it was not just about what knowledge (and more concrete resources) could be gained from Antarctica as a self-contained, discrete environment, but how research in that environment could be extrapolated to ‘mainland’ South Africa. Information gained in the oceanography programme about climate change was argued to be

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<sup>25</sup> For more on the impact of the image, see D. Cosgrove, “Contested Global Visions: One-World, Whole-Earth, and the Apollo Space Photographs,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 84, 2 (1994), 270-294.

<sup>26</sup> “Departement van Nasionale Opvoeding: Kabinetsmemorandum no. 38 van 1990,” 9 October 1990, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7 vol. 33.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

essential for the exploitation of natural resources 'at sea and in South Africa itself.'<sup>28</sup> Knowledge gained about invasive species on Marion Island was purportedly 'directly applicable to [the] environmental management capacity of South Africa.'<sup>29</sup> The benefits of international cooperation with Antarctic scientists were framed in the same way. The expertise gained in acoustic methods to estimate krill-populations during the BIOMASS programme, the memorandum posited, had already been useful for estimating fish populations along South Africa's West Coast and overseas technology in high resolution seismic and earth radar accessed via the Antarctic programme had implications for South African mining activities.<sup>30</sup>

Anxiety over whether South Africa's Antarctic programme would continue post-apartheid persisted despite funds being approved for the new base in Antarctica in 1992. The scientists and civil servants involved with the Antarctic programme worried whether the new government would have the political will to continue with the Antarctic programme.<sup>31</sup> The more severe sanctions against South Africa were dropped from 1992 onwards and both multi-lateral and bilateral ties to the international community were restored.

Moreover, it was not just a post-apartheid geopolitical world, but also a post-Soviet one. This meant that not only the domestic, but also the international political landscape had changed. The Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection of 1991 banned mining, and South Africa no longer needed to maintain Treaty activity to remain party to the CCAMLR. Nevertheless, alarm over the newly discovered hole in the ozone layer and warnings of global warming started to gain political currency, and the ANC government was keen to develop scientific skills among the black population of whom very few had been allowed access to research universities. Moreover, at least one influential cabinet minister, Vali Moosa, was personally interested in Antarctica.<sup>32</sup> The opening of SANAE IV in 1996 was attended by several ANC dignitaries who made the plane or ship journey to Antarctica (after the base colours were changed). Science is, however, a long term-investment and its returns cannot easily be

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Henry Valentine, Cape Town (18 August 2010), Stefaans Brümmer, "SA may prune polar project," *The Argus* (26 June 1992). Cecilia Viljoen, "Nuwe SA poolbasis in die weegskaal: Inligting nou van buiteland te kry," *Die Burger* (6 August 1992); "SANAE 4 in Antarktika tydelik agterweë," *Finansies en Tegniek* (28 August 1992); "SA kan Suidpool verlaat," *Die Burger* (25 October 1993).

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Henry Valentine, Cape Town (18 August 2010). Dirk van Schalkwyk also commented on the personal interest took by minister Moosa, Interview, Dirk van Schalkwyk, Pretoria (11 October 2010) Moosa visited in 1997.

measured. Because political as well as economic borders opened up and a new element appeared that could be used to appeal to tax-payers support: the commercial benefit in using Cape Town as an Antarctic gateway.<sup>33</sup>

Since South Africa's first expedition to Antarctica in 1959, there has been a continuous presence of South Africans in Dronning Maudland. The reasons for maintaining an expensive research programme on Antarctica, with relatively little output, changed over time, as explained above. Maintaining that presence was the responsibility of a network of people, scientists, diplomats, bureaucrats and ultimately the South African tax payer. *Being* that presence was the task of summer expedition personnel and especially overwintering teams, whose main duty was the monitoring of scientific instruments and the maintenance of the base during the long Antarctic winter.

## South Africa's Antarcticans

Two interrelated themes will be discussed in the second section of this chapter. Firstly it will address science in Antarctica as nationalist tool in the South African context. Secondly, it will discuss some strands the social fabric of the South Africa's Antarcticans, in terms of the interplay of gender, race and class.

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<sup>33</sup> Cape Town harbour had been used as a starting point for Norwegian and West-German Antarctic expeditions since these countries first launched their expeditions. The difference was that in the post-apartheid milieu, more countries would consider Cape Town (including Japan and the United Kingdom) and they could do so openly. Moreover, it also promoted Cape Town as an international tourism destination. The idea surfaced when South Africa took part in a highly publicised Soviet Antarctic rescue operation. The operation was widely interpreted as illustrative of the tentative warming of the South African-Russian relations and displayed the capacity of Cape Town as a centre for Antarctic logistics. "Reddingspoging uit Kaapstad," *Die Burger* (15 August 1991); "Warm SA response to Soviet mercy mission," *The Star* (15 August 1991); Hans-Peter Bakker, "Russians in peril: time running out for research ship trapped in the ice," *The Argus* (16 August 1991); Hans-Peter Bakker, "Soviet mercy dash: weather closes in," *The Star* (17 August 1991); "Antarctic rescue not necessary?" *The Citizen* (17 August 1991); Hans-Peter Bakker, "Red Alert: now bring 'em back alive," *Weekend Argus* (17 August 1991); "Sowjet-noodvlug na Antarktika gaan voort," *Die Burger* (20 August 1991); Editorial, "Antarctic drama," *The Daily News* (21 August 1991); Chris Bateman, "Mercy flight can't turn back," *The Cape Times* (21 August 1991); "Russian jet lands safely in Antarctic," *The Cape Times* (22 August 1991); Bun Booyens, "Russe veilig in Kaap ná gewaagde reddingsvlug van Suidpoolbasis," *Die Burger* (23 August 1991); Hans-Peter Bakker, "The Great Ice Trek," *The Argus* (23 August 1991); "A mission of daring and great bravery," *The Argus* (23 August 1991); Hans-Peter Bakker, Stefaans Brümmer and Vivian Horler, "Hug-a-Ruski! Open your hearts – mayor-elect's appeal to Cape Town," *The Argus* (23 August 1991); "Antarctic Rescue: 169 safe in CT," *The Citizen* (23 August 1991); Chris Bateman, "Polarniks' flooded with offers of help," *The Cape Times* (24 August 1991); Sahn Venter, "Broad grins on freezing faces as rescued Soviets hear of Gorbachev's return," *The Star* (24 August 1991); Editorial, "Reddingsoperasie open deure," *Die Burger* (26 August 1991); Willem Steenkamp, "Yeltsin to be told of SA co-operation in rescue," *The Cape Times* (28 August 1991); "Soviets, SA start talks on Antarctic base," *The Cape Times* (29 August 1991); Francois Lötter, "Gesprek met Rooies ná redding," *Beeld* (29 August 1991); "SA, Sowjets wil saamwerk," *Beeld* (30 August 1991); "Kaapstad lok buitelandse besigheid," *Tempo* (3 October 1991).

### ***Science and Representing the Nation***

As chapters four and five described, for South Africa to prove its interests in the Antarctic, it had to maintain a physical human presence in the Antarctica. These humans had to serve as handmaidens to science, which, in Antarctica – as we have seen largely had to serve the state. Thus, these men (and, much later, women) were representative of South Africa, the nation-state, in Antarctica. It has already been pointed out earlier in this chapter that these men were not all scientists, indeed, most of them were not, but yet they were there with the explicit purpose to *do science*, or at least, gather scientific data. Only a minute proportion of South Africa's population become scientists, let alone visit Antarctica or overwinter. But where the nation's interests and national identity were concerned, Carol Harisson and Ann Johnson wrote, scientists should not be abstracted from the 'broader body of citizens,' as the interactions between governments and scientists do not 'take place in a vacuum.'<sup>34</sup> Scientists have to converse with the broader public, especially on issues concerning government policy. It would be naïve to think scientists' professional work and career could be cleaved cleanly from their personal loyalties and beliefs. Sverker Sörlin noted of imperial science that:

This polycentricity of science and of the distribution of scientific institutions should be approached cautiously... Naturalists, however, like other people, bore identities; they belonged somewhere, and they were loyal to something or someone... the daily activities of natural history were carried out in a framework of institutions,... the decisive components of [which] were nationally defined... The process was irregular. Nonetheless, science was part of a general trend towards the recognition of the national.<sup>35</sup>

By the time the Treaty was signed in 1959, the links between the national, the central state and science had been forged. Antarctica, however, was a precarious locality. On the one hand, its colonisation was incomplete and owing to its environment, likely to remain so for the next few decades. International scientific and logistic collaborations in Antarctica proliferated. During the apartheid years South Africa collaborated with most Treaty countries on a variety of scientific projects, not least of which was BIOMASS (referred to in chapter five). Nevertheless, science in Antarctica was also explicitly national and harnessed to further nationalistic ideals – both in the domestic and international sphere.

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<sup>34</sup> Carol E. Harrison and Ann Johnson "Introduction: Science and National Identity" *Osiris*, 24, 1 (2009), 8.

<sup>35</sup> Sverker Sörlin, "Ordering the World for Europe: Science as Intelligence and Information as Seen from the Northern Periphery," *Osiris: Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise* 15 (2000), 53.

The relationship between science and nationalism in apartheid South Africa has not yet been subjected to the same scrutiny as science and racism or the health sciences.<sup>36</sup> Histories of Afrikaner nationalism are plentiful, many of which focus on culture, language and gender.<sup>37</sup> Very few works touched on science as a nation-building factor and where science featured the focus has been on techno-scientific engineering projects in mining and industry.

Recent works on the other major techno-scientific industry – that of the military – focused on military-strategic issues.<sup>38</sup> Harrison and Johnson have noted that historians of nationalism often take allegedly old rituals and symbols of nationality (giving the example of pumpkin pie in the US) and expose their ‘conscious fabrication and novelty.’<sup>39</sup> They noted that ‘mobilizing science in the construction of national identity proclaims novelty rather than concealing it and is essentially future oriented; a scientific icon of national achievement such as the space program is not subject to the same kind of deconstruction as pumpkin pie.’<sup>40</sup> Recent accounts by polar historians have unpacked polar science programmes with reference to nationalism and link it with broader histories of national and nationalistic scientific agendas.<sup>41</sup> As little have been written on science and nationalism in the South African context (indeed, very little attention has been paid to the history of science outside the health sciences during the apartheid regime in general) in South Africa restricts an historical analysis of

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<sup>36</sup> Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Harriet Deacon, “Racism and Medical Science in South Africa’s Cape Colony in the Mid- to Late Nineteenth Century,” *Osiris* 15 (2000), 190 – 206. The exception is the last chapter in Saul Dubow, although it focussed more on science and technicism in the apartheid state. Science, and science as synonymous with expertise, featured more widely as a factor in pre- World War II South Africa. Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa 1820-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Saul Dubow, “Afrikaner Nationalism, Apartheid and the Conceptualization of ‘Race,’” *The Journal of African History*, 33, 2 (1992), 209-237; Isabelle Hofmeyer, “Popularizing History: The Case of Gustav Preller,” *Journal of African History*, 29, 3 (1988), 521-535; T. Dunbar-Moodie, “Calvinism and Afrikaner Nationalism: A Comment,” *African Affairs*, 80, 320 (July 1981), 403-404; Sandra Swart, “The Construction of Eugène Marais as an Afrikaner Hero,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 30, 4, Special Issue: Writing in Transition in South Africa: Fiction, History, Biography (December 2004), 847-867.; Louise Vincent, “Bread and Honour: White Working Class Women and Afrikaner Nationalism in the 1930s,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, 1 (2000), 61-78; D. Welsh, “Urbanisation and the Solidarity of Afrikaner Nationalism,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 7, 2 (July 1969), 265-276.

<sup>38</sup> Sue Onslow, ed., *Cold War in Southern Africa: White power, black liberation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>39</sup> Harrison and Johnson, “Introduction: Science and National Identity,” 8.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Adrian Howkins, “Frozen Empires: A History of the Antarctic Sovereignty Dispute Between Britain, Argentina, and Chile, 1939-1959,” (PhD dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, Austin 2008); Klaus Dodds, “The Great Trek: New Zealand and the British/Commonwealth 1955-1958 Trans-Antarctic Expedition,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 33, 1 (January 2005), 93-114 and Peder Roberts, “Field of Frozen Dreams: Science, Strategy and the Antarctic in Norway, Sweden and the British Empire 1912-1952” (PhD dissertation, University of Stanford, Stanford, 2010).

scientists (and others) representing the nation in Antarctica to the ‘pumpkin pie’ (or ‘melktert’) variety for the time being.<sup>42</sup>

The trappings of nationalism have been discussed in chapter five: flag raising, naming, issuing stamps. South Africa’s Antarctic activities in the 1960s were characterised by such performances of banal nationalism, the ‘ideological habits which enable(d)... nations... to be reproduced.’<sup>43</sup> Initially, the men received a specific mandate to represent South Africa. The Department of Transport arranged for the first expedition to meet Prime Minister HF Verwoerd,<sup>44</sup> at the SCAR meeting in 1963 the Minister of Transport told the team members that ‘South Africa is watching you.’<sup>45</sup> The men were also made aware of both their belonging to and representing a nation state by a picture of the state president staring down at them from the dining room wall and by celebrating republican days such as Paul Kruger day, the Day of the Vow as well as Antarctic traditions such as midwinter, when messages were sent around to Antarctic stations, sometimes even undersigned by heads of state. In the broader picture, however, South Africa’s expeditions were on the fringe of nation-building. South Africa never had polar heroes that were contemporary to Frijdtof Nansen and Roald Amundsen (Norway), Robert Scott and Ernest Shackleton (Britain), Douglas Mawson (Australia) or Richard Byrd (US). Domestic politics sometimes influenced Antarctic policies, but international relations steered it. Unlike the case with Chile and Argentina, Antarctic politics very rarely actually catalysed change in South Africa’s domestic and international politics, as discussed in chapters three and four. If anything, the tokens of nationalism in South Africa’s Antarctic expeditions illustrated more about the pervasiveness of nationalism rather than Antarctic expeditions as a nation-building exercise.

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<sup>42</sup> ‘Melktert’ (*milk tart*) is not used haphazardly here. In 1993 an article announced that a Bloemfontein factory was asked to prepare freeze-dried meals for the summer expedition, including *melktert*, a ‘traditional’ Afrikaner dish. Sobeth Bester, “Melktert vir Suidpool in Bloemfontein voorberei,” *Volksblad* (19 October 1999).

<sup>43</sup> Michael Billig coined the term banal nationalism, arguing that nationalism is not just an intermittent mood in established nations but rather an endemic condition. He explicitly stated that banal nationalism did not imply benign nationalism. Unlike Argentina and Britain, for example, the South African performance of nationalism on Antarctica was less vigorous and non-militaristic, but its mundanity did not render it meaningless. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), 6-7.

<sup>44</sup> Interviews with Maarten du Preez, Pretoria (17 March 2010), Chris de Weerd, Pretoria (1 March 2010). Except Dick Bonnema, who moved to South Africa after World War II. He felt that he was excluded on purpose because he was a liberally inclined Dutchman. Interview with Dick Bonnema, Swellendam (5 August 2010). Hannes la Grange also did not allow him to take a Dutch flag along.

<sup>45</sup> “Aflosspan na Suidpool: S.A se Oë is op Julle, Hoor Ekpedisie,” *Die Transvaler* (29 November 1960) in SAB BTS 102/2/7/2 vol. 4.

For the teams who overwintered, there was little glamour to their task of representing the nation. Excelling in one's field was not good enough. In 1955, when writing to the South African authorities about the kind of man he was looking for to join the Commonwealth Transantarctic Expedition (CTAE), Fuchs warned that the conditions can be 'to say the least...pretty rough.'<sup>46</sup> He also pointed out that expedition members would have to assist in Base chores and that it is 'very necessary that each man is of an equable temperament and is himself confident that he can stand up to and enjoy life in such a small community for so long a time.'<sup>47</sup>

Their tasks were routine and often mundane. 'Doing science' more often than not meant maintaining scientific instruments under the extreme conditions of the Antarctic, and increasingly engineers and technicians overwintered for scientific projects.<sup>48</sup> Similar to polar bases elsewhere, one of the main fissures within teams was between scientists and support personnel. Hannes la Grange commented on the symbiotic relationship that needed to exist between them, in the case of support personnel assisting with scientific projects: '...the non-scientist, having to do something outside his own field, will want to feel that he is not doing only the scientist's dirty work but that he is indeed doing something very constructive and of great scientific importance!'<sup>49</sup> Whilst the hard work of the support personnel were acknowledged, science to La Grange remained the unquestioned *raison d'être* for being in Antarctica. La Grange assumed, throughout the talk, that science was inherently superior and something in which everyone would naturally want to participate. La Grange naïvely promoted the idea that Africa's presence on Antarctica was primarily scientifically motivated, even though it was publically made clear by Minister Eric Louwat the Washington DC conference that South Africa's investment was of a politically strategic nature.

The experiences of Gordon Artz and Johan Bothma, two meteorologists who represented South Africa in the International Year of Geophysical Cooperation (which followed upon the successful IGY in 1958/1959), at the British Base at Halley Bay demonstrate the inconsistency with which the Union Government treated their 'polar-pioneers' in the early years of its involvement. Unlike the Commonwealth Transantarctic Expedition or the first

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<sup>46</sup> V. Fuchs to Dr Schumann, 11 August 1955, SAB VER 112 AB 16/9/2/92.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Peter Suttcliffe, Hermanus (17 May 2011). Group Interview with physicists at the University of the North-West, Potchefstroom campus, Potchefstroom (8 September 2010).

<sup>49</sup> J.J la Grange, "The requirements and nature of the logistic support for a small national Antarctic expedition (Science and Logistics)," *Symposium on Antarctic Logistics* (Washington DC: National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council, 1963), 24.

South African expedition, this was more routine, indeed, South Africa was rather reluctant to participate in the IGC and lacked the funds to do so.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, it was not the kind of showpiece expedition that lent itself easily to markers like ‘firsts’ and thus lent itself less to public mythmaking.

The South Africans who participated had less than two weeks to prepare and Treasury approval was only gained on the eve of their departure.<sup>51</sup> Although the South African press reported on the adventure awaiting these two men, neither of them were under the impression that they were representing South Africa as pawns in a much larger game. They received no special directives from their superiors, nor were they given a specific brief on what they may or may not tell the press.<sup>52</sup> In the ‘sticky, muggy Durban heat’, where both men came from, the weather was one of the few topics upon which the press expanded. The politics were a mere sideshow. Bothma told newspapers that he was allergic to heat and that, with more than two years’ experience on Marion Island ‘this sort of life gets to you.’<sup>53</sup> Artz quipped that the disability allowance they would receive in the Antarctic was to compensate for the cold.<sup>54</sup> Then again, a reporter making inquiries with the Department of Transport about the two men chosen to go to Antarctica, was met ‘with a tight-lipped “no comment”’.<sup>55</sup> This might just be an indication of a specific public servant culture – one where orders were followed and questions were not asked, but it could also be indicative of a lack of domestic propaganda value in such an endeavour.

Bothma and Artz gained valuable experience of base life on Halley Bay. Rather than cultural difficulties, they experienced some of the misunderstandings that arose when scientific and non-scientific people had to live and work in close quarters. The non-scientific personnel, often in leadership positions, were not always fully aware of the difficulties faced by

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<sup>50</sup> Political expediency and professional links were the determining factors in South Africa’s eventual participation.

<sup>51</sup> Gordon M Artz, “Report on Secondment to Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey in Antarctica, 1959,” 18 June 1960, ALP, Private Collection, Gordon M Artz.

<sup>52</sup> Interviews with Gordon Artz, Silvermines, (27 August 2010) and Johan Bothma, Pretoria (6 March 2010). In fact, the only correspondence that Artz received from the South African Weather Bureau was an outstanding communications bill of a negligible amount.

<sup>53</sup> “Met. Men Find Escape As Durban Gets Sticky,” *Natal Daily News* (15 November 1958) and “Two ‘met men’ off to Antarctic,” *The Star* (14 November 1958) in ALP, Private Collection, Gordon M Artz.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

scientists and vice versa. The potential for misunderstandings were magnified in the microcosm of a research base.<sup>56</sup>

Their experiences provided some insight into what individual Union scientists experienced with regards to the environment created for them. In the 1950s, there seemed to have been a feeling that the government cared little and understood even less about the needs of scientists. At the outset of their feedback on the scientific programme Artz and Bothma emphasised that ‘in the present era one goes to Antarctica not merely for “showing the flag” or joining an exclusive club, but to participate in a vast international scientific effort.’<sup>57</sup> Halley Bay had eight scientists in a team of twelve people and the support personnel often assisted the scientists. This was contrasted with Marion Island, where the 1956 team led by Bothma had three scientists and seven support staff, which they considered ‘out of all proportion, and to say the least, uneconomical.’<sup>58</sup> Undeniably, scientists and politicians were using one another for their own aims. This was not always acknowledged by the actors or perhaps even consciously executed. Most often, however, the individual scientist on the ground was just doing his job, without realising his role in the broader political drama. The Antarctic also came with its own code of manners and rites of passage. Initially, Pretoria seemed unaware of most of the rituals representing this code. When, at midwinter ‘a cable from the Weather Bureau failed to appear on the notice board [at Halley Bay] among the large number of messages received from all over the world, [Artz] was ashamed and annoyed.’<sup>59</sup> Amongst this ‘large number of messages’ were greetings from the British Queen, the British Prime Minister, and the President of the United States and even Nikita Khrushchev.<sup>60</sup>

On their return to South Africa, the stories related to the press focussed on the adventurous aspects of the men’s journey, the extreme weather and their ‘bewilderment’ at being back in ‘civilisation’ and their reunification with friends and family.<sup>61</sup> There was at least one tongue-

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<sup>56</sup> Gordon M Artz, “Report on Secondment to Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey in Antarctica, 1959,” 18 June 1960, ALP, Private Collection, Gordon M Artz. Interview with G.M Artz, Silvermines, (27 August 2010) Artz added that, on Halley Bay, the at times arduous conditions were mitigated by the base commander, George Lush of the Royal Navy who had previous Antarctic experience and who took interest in their work.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> “Where Mid-Winter is a Red Letter Occasion: At Halley Bay, Antarctica,” *The Natal Mercury* (21 June 1960) in in ALP, Private Collection, Gordon M Artz.

<sup>61</sup> “Durban life is hectic after Antarctic quiet: Back to civilisation” *The Natal Daily News* (2 March 1960) and “From Antarctica a Durban Man brings ... Unique Gift for S.A. Radio Announcer,” *The Natal Mercury* (21 March 1960) in in ALP, Private Collection, Gordon M Artz.

in-the-cheek reference to the Empire. Artz brought back the Union Jack that had been hoisted at the base during the winter months as a souvenir. It made its way to the Natal University's Golden Jubilee celebrations as the 'the most unique Union Jack in the Commonwealth – a Union Jack on which the sun never rose.'<sup>62</sup>

### **Reflections on a social history of South Africa's Antarcticans**

For the most part, as it is currently written, much of Antarctic history really is about the dead white men referred to in the introduction to this chapter. The Edwardian explorers remain the dominant human face of Antarctica. The image of the individual man battling the elements for the sake of empire and nation has gained such traction, that a whole era has been named after them – the heroic age.<sup>63</sup> These heroes were, however, preceded by whalers and sealers, who lived and worked on the peninsular islands since the middle nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>64</sup> Little cultural history has been written on the nineteenth century sealing communities in the Cape Colony and Natal (South Africa only became involved in Antarctic whaling in the twentieth century), but the involvement of Maoris in the southern ocean whaling trade has been documented.<sup>65</sup> Nor were all these heroic frontiersmen white. Men of colour participated in some of the earliest voyages to the Antarctic.<sup>66</sup> The most

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<sup>62</sup> "Sun Never Rose on this Union Jack" (21 May 1960) in ALP, Private Collection, Gordon M Artz.

<sup>63</sup> It is also this era, especially the story of Robert Falcon Scott's death and the subsequent lionization that has been the subject of the most critical discussion during the past two decades. See especially Bloom, L., *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Beau Riffenburgh, *The Myth of the Explorer: The Press, Sensationalism and Geographical Discovery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Max Jones, *The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott's Antarctic Sacrifice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Stephanie Barczewski, *Antarctic Destinies: Scott Shackleton and the Changing Face of Heroism* (London: Continuum, 2007) and Janice Cavell, "Manliness in the life and posthumous reputation of Robert Falcon Scott," *Canadian Journal of History* 45, 3 (Winter 2010), 537-564. Scott in particular, was not necessarily primarily interested in attaining the South Pole for the British Crown as he was in the potential financial gain.

<sup>64</sup> For an innovative study of the lives of sealers in Antarctica, see Andres Zarankin and Maria Ximena Senatore, 'Archaeology in Antarctica: Nineteenth-Century Capitalism Expansion Strategies,' *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 9, 1 (March 2005). South African sealers were almost exclusively involved with the sub-Antarctic and not the Antarctic. See Lance van Sittert, 'Antarctic History from Below: Joseph Daniels and the Annexation of Marion Island, 1923-1948,' paper presented at the SCAR History Workshop, Stellenbosch, South Africa (26-30 July 2011); Thierry Rousset, "'Might is Right' A study of the Cape Town/Crozets elephant seal oil trade (1832-1869)' (MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2011), especially chapter four and John Cooper 'Human History of the Prince Edward Islands' in Steven Chown and Pierre W. Froneman, eds. *The Prince Edward Islands: Land-Sea Interactions in a Changing Ecosystem* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2008) for short South African descriptions.

<sup>65</sup> Kathryn Yusoff and Klaus Dodds, "Settlement and unsettlement in Aotearoa/ New Zealand and Antarctica," *Polar Record* 41, 2 (2005), 146. Olivia Walton wrote an essay on the life of a coloured whaler in the last years of South African Antarctic whaling, "'The Old Story is Better than a New Story': South Africa's Involvement in Antarctic Whaling in the 1960s Through an Analysis of the Life Story of a Langebaan Whaler" (Honours essay, University of Cape Town, 2010).

<sup>66</sup> The earliest documented voyage that included a black person was that of the United States Exploring Expedition led by Charles Wilkes in 1840. They were accompanied by Te Atua (John Sacs), who was born of

infamous polar example is that of Matthew Henson, Robert Peary's marginalised African American team member in his quest for the North Pole who was only recognised for the role he played almost fifty years after. Antarctic exploration had similar actors, often Maoris: Louis Potaka travelled with Richard Byrd in 1935 and Te Tou raised the flag at the official opening of New Zealand's Scott Base during the International Geophysical Year (IGY) in 1957/58. They too were attended to much later, and then mostly in a restorative context, in terms of their being overlooked as black pioneers.

In as far as South Africa's continuous occupation of a research base from 1960 on Antarctica is concerned, the question can be asked if one can write a revisionist social history of South Africa's Antarcticans? One would not want it to be reduced to merely including individual women and black people because of their physical identities. Until the late 1980s (for Marion) and mid-1990s (for Antarctica) women and Africans were indeed absent from South Africa's overwintering teams. The key requirement for overwintering in Australian Antarctic Territory, noted Christy Collis, was a penis.<sup>67</sup> To overwinter for South Africa, that penis also had to be white. On Antarctica, it was certainly deliberately kept white – it was the one place where white South African men in service of the apartheid government could not relegate hard manual labour to a black underclass.<sup>68</sup>

As has been noted throughout this dissertation, Antarctica did not have a very visible role in South Africa's public imagination, nor a place in the grand narratives of South African history. Moreover, very few South Africans had ever or will ever visit Antarctica or have any direct connection to the continent. But the physical absence of female and black bodies from overwintering teams is exactly what makes it such a revealing community to study. It foregrounded the idealized and stereotypical constructs against which the normative masculinity was constructed. As historians have shown, gender is not an essential, reified concept. Raywen Connell and James Messerschmidt wrote: 'gender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether

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a Pakeha father and Maori mother. Yusoff and Dodds, "Settlement and Unsettling," 146 and Turi MacFarlane "Maori Association with the Antarctic – *Tiro o te Moana ki te Tonga*," (Graduate Certificate in Antarctic Studies Essay Canterbury University, 2008), 7.

<sup>67</sup> Christy Collis, "The Australian Antarctic Territory: A Man's World?" *Signs* 34,3 (2009), 514.

<sup>68</sup> In a notebook where team members wrote down witticisms, it was summed up as such: 'Nick (while doing some unaccustomed manual labour): "Now I know why kaffirs are so lazy, their work is fucking horrible."' Bar Quote Book, c. 1983, Documents: Research base material, SANAE diaries, letters and personal, ALP.

real or imaginary) of femininity.’<sup>69</sup> This section will argue that the hypermasculine is palpable on the Antarctic continent and in Antarctic politics. As in other extreme environments, the ‘domination of nature and the ability to survive in a challenging landscape’ became and remained a key sign of masculine fitness.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Antarctic politics, as practiced in the boardrooms on the South African mainland, is that of international relations – an arena which is often characterised as a masculine domain. Both the physical and the paper continent is then hypermasculinised.<sup>71</sup> Thus, this section will contend, Antarctica can be fertile ground for exploring hegemonic masculinities.<sup>72</sup> If hegemonic masculinity is partly the most honoured way of being a man and require other men to position themselves in relation to it, a research base full of ‘ice-world pioneers’ may serve as an interesting case study.

Furthermore, class and race factors, as Morrell has shown, are ‘constitutive of the form that masculinity takes.’<sup>73</sup> Who were the South Africans that went to Antarctica for the sake of science or for the sake of geopolitical strategies? This section looks at how these communities, in service of Science and in service of the State changed over time, and how that reflected changes in the social fabric of South Africa.

From the 1940s onwards, small societies were imported into Antarctica and rarely would any individual stay for longer than three continuous years. There were thus no indigenous Antarcticans, and that the communities who lived there were transient and mostly rooted elsewhere. Since the decline of whaling and the rise of science as the main Antarctic enterprise, it would be unfair, however, to write about an Antarctic underclass. If a birds’ eye view is taken, and depending on the definition of ‘working class’, the argument can be made that the working class is completely frozen out of Antarctica. Coals miners never knew that

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<sup>69</sup> R.W Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender and Society* 19, 6 (December 2005), 848.

<sup>70</sup> Maureen P. Hogan and Timothy Pursell, “The ‘Real Alaskan’: Nostalgia and Rural Masculinity in the ‘Last Frontier,’” *Men and Masculinities* 11 (October 2008), 67. Whilst physical fitness was certainly an requirement at least until the 1970s, technology has improved to such an extent that one can spend a very sedentary year on an Antarctic base, nevertheless, the picture of the adventurous and physically fit man persists in the public sphere. One only need to think about the press surrounding men like Sir Ranulph Fiennes or more recently the environmental activist Lewis Gordon Pugh.

<sup>71</sup> Charlotte Hooper, *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations and Gender Politics* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>72</sup> Although it falls outside the immediate scope of this dissertation, there are energetic debates within men’s studies and masculinity studies on the validity and usefulness of the model of ‘hegemonic masculinity.’ It remains, however, a useful framework for writing history. It specifically allows for change over time and lends itself to drawing on discourse and in the case of the ritual ‘traditions’ described here, literal performances. For an example of this debate see the correspondence between Christine Beasley, James W. Messerschmidt and Richard Howson in *Men and Masculinities* 11 (October 2008) from page 86 to 113.

<sup>73</sup> Robert Morrell, “Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in Southern African Studies,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24,4 (December 1998), 607.

their labour helped the *Terra Nova* steam south or factory workers that garments they made protected an esteemed scientist from hypothermia. Developing countries like South Africa and India have rarely been publically criticised for investing in Antarctic infrastructure (which has little tangible return) in the face of mass social inequality at home.

Antarctica's very environment call for relatively highly skilled – rather than menial – labour.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, class distinctions and the heterogeneity of the 'middle-class' is particularly pronounced in the isolation of Antarctica, where people whose paths would rarely cross otherwise not only shared working lives, but also domestic lives. It was also a place where the interrelationship between class and status, with class determined by life chances and status by social prestige, was illustrated.<sup>75</sup> For most of the twentieth century, South Africa's Antarctic teams were small and seemingly homogenous: white young males mostly drawn from either the civil service or academia. Yet, depending on the time period, the South African teams, both those who overwintered and those who went for the summer period only, were frequently stratified along the lines of 'scientists' and 'non-scientists.'<sup>76</sup> Antarctica was a continent that revealed the masculine bias of even the most progressive of countries and many of them only started regularly including women in overwintering teams in the late 1980s. Their experiences and how they were perceived by the male-dominated Antarctic world, the media and themselves, were couched in terms of the Antarctic environment as foreign and extreme and thus not bound to the same rules of the mainland. Often, the attitude towards women in Antarctica was a distillation of mainland attitudes, stripped bare by the Antarctic environment.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> As mentioned earlier, in the case of South Africa where hard manual labour was typically relegated to blacks, black labourers were not included in the South African complement. This could be because they simply did not believe black people to be able to withstand the environment, but much more likely is that black people could simply not be included in something that was redolent with the language of prestige and technological progress. Interestingly, unlike Antarctic nations such as the US, Britain, Norway or Germany, South Africa still does not include cleaners and janitors in their summer take-over teams, to the chagrin of some scientists, who feel that not only does the cleaning duties infringe on the limited time they have for research on the island, but that it would be financially more sensible to contract cleaners, creating jobs and giving the workers an opportunity to travel. The reverse side of the argument is that having everyone perform cleaning duties serve as a social equalisation strategy, which is arguably more necessary in the case of the highly stratified South African society than post-industrial Germany.

<sup>75</sup> On the interplay between class and status see David Morgan, 'Class and Masculinity,' Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff Hearn and R.W. Connell, eds. *Handbook of Studies on Masculinities* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005), 167.

<sup>76</sup> The ship's officers and crew rarely visible in accounts and press reports.

<sup>77</sup> The first women 'explorers' or 'polar heroines' in South Africa only went on their expeditions in the 2000s and will not be included in this discussion. Lewander remarked that 'polar heroines,' were 'extremely keen to underline their competence for their particular missions and express this in a manner that would be unthinkable for a male researcher. His endowments would be taken for granted and would therefore hardly

It has been shown in the introduction to this dissertation that it was only in the 1980s that historians and geographers began to offer critical and interrogative interpretations of Antarctic history, (as opposed to simply Whiggish ‘hero’ narratives). A key part of this critical, revisionist history has focussed on gender.<sup>78</sup> Antiquarian and popular history sometimes also consciously have included women, if not gender.<sup>79</sup> There are at least two reasons for the relative prominence of gender in scholarly Antarctic histories.<sup>80</sup> When Antarctic scholarship in the humanities started to gather momentum, gender as a category of analyses have gained currency in mainstream academia.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, gender was very hard to ignore. As with gender in general, it should be kept in mind that not all men experienced Antarctica in the same way, nor did they necessarily share a similar experience of being a *man* in Antarctica.<sup>82</sup> The experience of Antarctica was, however, often gendered and

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be mentioned.’ In the South African context, there is certainly scope for a comparative study of ‘polar heroines’ and ‘polar Africans.’ Lisbeth Lewander, “Women and Civilization on Ice,” 98

<sup>78</sup> Books that deal specifically with gender include Elizabeth Chipman, *Women on Ice: A History of Women in the Far South*, (Melbourne University Press: Carlton:1986); Esther D Rothblum, Jacqueline S Weinstock and Jessica F Morris, eds, *Women in the Antarctic* (The Haworth Press: New York, 1998); Lisa Bloom, *Gender on Ice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) and Robin Burns, *Just Tell Them I Survived! Women in Antarctica*. (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2001)The feminist journal *Signs* brought out a special edition on polar gender studies (including the Arctic). Lisbeth Lewander regularly published on female scientists and gender in polar communities. For a good example of the issues at stake see Lisbeth Lewander, “Women and Civilization on Ice,” Heidi Hansson and Catherine Norberg, eds, *Cold Matters: Cultural Perceptions of Snow, Ice and Cold* (Umeå: Umeå University and Royal Skyttean Society, 2009). Perceptive works like that of Tom Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) and Brigid Hains, *The Ice and the Inland: Mawson, Flynn and the Myth of the Frontier* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2002) included gender, both femininity and masculinity, in their analyses.

<sup>79</sup> John Cooper, for example, wrote a deliberately personal account of the human history of the Prince Edward Islands. He wrote about the exclusion of women from the island in an indignant manner, noting that he also questioned the establishment’s weak reasons for excluding women. He actively advocated for the equal treatment of women and men on SANAP programmes. Ironically, however, he ended the account with a somewhat patronising ‘Right-on sister.’ John Cooper, “Human History of the Prince Edward Islands,” Steven L. Chown and Pierre W. Froneman, eds, *The Prince Edward Islands: Land-Sea Interactions in a Changing Ecosystem* (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2008).

<sup>80</sup> Stephen Pyne’s *The Ice* is a major exception.

<sup>81</sup> Joan Scott’s landmark article on gender as a category of analysis was published in 1986. Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis,” *The American Historical Review* 91,5 (December 1986), 1053-1057 and R.W Connell’s *Gender and Power* which proposed a model of multiple masculinities, as opposed to the ‘male sex-role’ model in 1987. R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power:Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1987). Lisa Bloom’s groundbreaking *Gender on Ice*, published in 1995, discussed both masculinity and femininity at the poles, the most well-known chapter being on the portayal of these male ‘polar heroes’ in the *National Geographic*, into the 1980s. Bloom, *Gender on Ice*, chapter two.

<sup>82</sup> As Lynne Segal succinctly put it: there ‘are limitations to what can be assumed about men’s shared experience based on the mere physical presence of the penis.’ Described in Peter Jackson, ‘The Cultural Politics of Masculinity: Towards a Social Geography,’ *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16, 2 (1991), 207. Jackson explains: ‘Male sexuality is most certainly not any single shared experience for men. It is not any single or simple thing at all – but the site of any number of emotions of weakness and strenght, pleasure and pain, anxiety, conflict, tension and struggle, none of them mapped out in such a way as to make the obliteration of the agency of women heterosexual engagements inevitable. Male sexuality cannot be reduced to the most popular meanings of sex acts, let alone to sex acts themselves. It becomes

revealing of certain aspects of the hegemonic masculinity, of the time. Thus, grounded in this theoretical background, the rest of this section use selected episodes and rites as case studies.

### ***Domestic men and settling Antarctica***

The first women who overwintered in Antarctica did so as newly-wed wives on an American expedition in 1946 to 1947.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the leader of the American IGY operations said in 1959 that he felt ‘the men themselves didn’t want women there. It was a pioneering job. I think the presence of women wreck the illusion of the frontiersman – the illusion of being a hero.’<sup>84</sup> The American observer who went down with the first South African Antarctic expedition told the Orange Free State-based *Die Volksblad*, that ‘no, really, women should be kept from Antarctica, it is a peaceful part of the world, and we want to keep it like that.’<sup>85</sup> The papers also published extracts from a talk by Phil Law, leader of many Australian expeditions, that men go to the Antarctic in part to flee ‘nagging wives’.<sup>86</sup> Several other syndicated articles on Antarctica as a male sanctum were published in the South African press.<sup>87</sup> The tone was usually quasi-humorous. The message was never questioned. This did not mean, however, that the feminine, or conversations about the feminine, was absent from the continent. Some older team members recalled that while they spoke about women, the possibility of women living in Antarctica never crossed their minds.<sup>88</sup>

In the Antarctic there was ‘a peculiar mix of frenetic feats of physical endurance... during the summer season on the one hand, and a world of artificial domesticity in the hut on the other.’<sup>89</sup> This domesticity took on a very real form in terms of men having to share cooking duty. Unlike most other countries, South Africa never included chefs or cooks in their overwintering teams on Antarctica. It was assumed most of the team members would have to learn how to cook, which was indeed the case for many of the men interviewed. Until then

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intelligible only if placed within actual histories of men’s intimate relationships with others – or the lack of them.’

<sup>83</sup> Jenny Darlington and Edith ‘Jackie’ Ronne. Both Darlington and Ronne wrote of the experience in memoirs with Jenny Darlington’s the most well-known. Jenny Darlington, *My Antarctic Honeymoon: A Year at the Bottom of the World* (New York: Doubleday, 1956).

<sup>84</sup> Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence*, 215.

<sup>85</sup> The newspaper wryly observed that ‘and that from a man who has been married less than six months. “Vroue moet wegby uit vreesame Antarktika,” *Die Volksblad* (1 Desember 1959).

<sup>86</sup> Sapa- Reuter, “Party mans vlug van vrouegekyf (of dalk werk) na Suidpool,” *Die Volksblad* (24 November 1959); Sapa-Reuter, “Een plek waar mans vroue kan ontduik,” *Die Volksblad* (29 June 1961).

<sup>87</sup> Sapa-Reuter, “Vroue dring dalk in by mans se heiligdom,” *Die Volksblad* (18 November 1959).

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Maarten du Preez, Pretoria (17 March 2010).

<sup>89</sup> Brigid Hains, *The Ice and the Inland*, 26

they would have been provided for by wives or mothers, which was also mostly the case.<sup>90</sup> These cooking classes were often commented on in interviews as the most memorable part of team training, because they asked something extraordinary. Fire-fighting on the other hand, was a taken-for-granted lesson. Cooking as an act of domesticity may be a small example of patterns of masculinity in South Africa itself, but in the Antarctic it was amplified to something newsworthy. Nor was Antarctica seen as a place where celibate men live monastic lives. Unmarried women were sometimes invited to write to the single men and ‘warm their hearts.’<sup>91</sup>

André le Roux van der Merwe wrote the only published memoir in South Africa of his year in Antarctica. The team doctor, he was the person with whom the men ‘shared our secrets, or asked for advice, or commiseration.’<sup>92</sup> When Van der Merwe described the emotional lives of the men he frequently referred to their relationship with their wives, mothers and families, the emotional being equated with the feminine, the domestic.<sup>93</sup> In a chapter entitled ‘Introspection,’ he related a day journey into the field, musing about the nature of Antarctica. His musings were full of contradictions, describing the ‘fitfulness of Antarctica that makes him attractive’ and the ‘sameness of the scene, the regularity of lump of snow to lump of snow.’<sup>94</sup> ‘You are master of the environment,’ he wrote, ‘and slave to the splendour of the vastness.’<sup>95</sup> It is when grappling with this contradictory nature of Antarctica that he missed his wife and children – and the way they treat him and serve him as the father of the household: his wife experimented with the meals and building castles in the sky, his daughter bringing him his slippers, his son contributing to the household through working on the

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<sup>90</sup> Or black domestic servants, although this particular intimate relationship between blacks and whites was not spoken about in public. On men borrowing aprons from ‘their wives or their mothers’ see “Suidpoolmanne leer – om te kook en te eet,” undated newspaperclipping in scrapbook of Gerrie Scholtz, ALP, Private Collections, Gerrie Scholtz. Funnily enough, the article was accompanied by an ad for anti-indigestion medicine. Also interview with Christo Wolfaardt, Pretoria (19 June 2010).

<sup>91</sup> “Jongmans in Koue vra Nooiens moet Skryf,” undated newspaperclipping in scrapbook of Gerrie Scholtz, ALP, Private Collections, Gerrie Scholtz. At least one of these correspondences ended in an ill-fated romance, where the woman fell in love with a team member during the correspondence but married the ‘wrong’ man, who ‘tore up all the lovely pictures of them with their long beards and penguins.’ She had since divorced him. E-mail correspondence Dora Scott and Celia Brits (26 September 2011).

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Maarten du Preez, Pretoria, (17 March 2010). The other surviving team members interviewed remembered ‘Dokkie’ in similar terms. Interviews with Theo van Wijk, Kempton Park (20 March 2010); Dick Bonnema, Swellendam (5 August 2010) and Chris de Weerd, Pretoria (1 March 2010). He was the oldest team member was seen as the patriarch (more so than the team leader, who seemed to have been unapproachable).

<sup>93</sup> See for example Van der Merwe, *Die Wit Horison*, 76 -82.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 94.

land.<sup>96</sup> When faced with the paradoxes of the Antarctic environment, it was his role as husband and father, which he missed most – and regretted not doing better.<sup>97</sup> They might have been physically absent from his everyday life but his perception of his relation to them was interwoven into his perception of being a man in the Antarctic environment. He was a slave to its feminine, passive qualities like beauty – although by the (linguistically unnecessary) use of the masculine pronoun the continent as actively ‘fitful’ was masculinized. And it was over this active, masculine environment that Van der Merwe was master.

Fatherhood seemed to have been an important confirmation of status. When another of the first team’s members became a father in Antarctica, the press wrote about it. The fact that he was in Antarctica whilst the child was born was portrayed as heroism rather than abandonment of paternal duties.<sup>98</sup>

The South Africans on the first team south were cast in a frontier mould – drawing on the narrative of the Voortrekker frontiersman.<sup>99</sup> Van der Merwe recounts how they celebrated the Day of the Vow, and how Hannes la Grange asked that as ‘the Lord had answered the prayers of our forefathers one hundred years ago, may he answer the prayers of where we sail into the wild’<sup>100</sup> The trope of the pioneer was also expressed in the bodily object of the beard,

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 93-94. Van der Merwe also signed off his letters ‘Pa’ – the Afrikaans term of endearment for father. Afrikaner fathers were addressed as Pa within the family circle - even by his wife –and also in the third person (‘Pa will Pa please hand me Pa’s book’). It is a good example of the discourse of patriarchy entering everyday language. Earlier in the book, when describing the role of the male emperor penguin in nesting the egg during the Antarctic winter, Van der Merwe jocularly, but not innocently, wrote that he hoped it was a ‘custom that will never get a foothold in Western Civilization.’ Ibid, 32.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 94.

<sup>98</sup> “He got the news in a radio call, Daddy is in the Antarctic,” *Sunday Times*, undated, clipping from ALP, Private Collections, Chris de Weerd and Interview with Chris de Weerd, Pretoria, (1 March 2010).

<sup>99</sup> The Voortrekkers were white Dutch-speaking farmers who moved from the British-controlled south into the interior from the 1830s. Their history was popularised by Gustav Preller in the early twentieth century and became one of the foundation myths of Afrikaner nationalism. See Isabel Hofmeyr, “Popularizing History: The Case of Gustav Preller,” *Journal of African History* 29,3 (1988) 521-535

<sup>100</sup> Van der Merwe, 19. The Day of the Vow commemorates the Battle of Blood River/Ncome River on 16 December 1838 when less than 500 Voortrekkers (with superior fire power) won a battle against an estimated 10 000 Zulus. Before the battle the religious Voortrekkers made a covenant with God that if they win, they will commemorate the day forever. It is probably the most emotional of all the Afrikaner foundation myths and has been used in political mythmaking ever since. Post-apartheid, the new government reinvented it as the Day of Reconciliation. See Albert Grundlingh and Hilary Sapire, “From Feverish Festival to Repetitive Ritual? The Changing Fortunes of Great Trek Mythology in an Industrializing South Africa, 1938-1988,” *South African Historical Journal* 21 (1989) and Anton Ehlers, “Desegregating history in South Africa: The Case of the Covenant and the Battle of Blood/Ncome River,” *Department of History, University of Stellenbosch*.

[http://sun025.sun.ac.za/portal/page/portal/Arts/Departemente1/geskiedenis/docs/desegregating\\_history.pdf](http://sun025.sun.ac.za/portal/page/portal/Arts/Departemente1/geskiedenis/docs/desegregating_history.pdf)

(Accessed 2 February 2012).

the growth of which was encouraged by competitions for men with the best beard.<sup>101</sup> This relic of a particular kind of Victorian masculinity and Afrikaner republican masculinity at the turn of the century, was reinvented in Antarctica as part of imagery of the pioneer or the man free from restriction.<sup>102</sup> In the context of the all-male research base, where men were responsible for traditionally domestic tasks, beards also symbolically reaffirmed men's status as men, as biologically different from women.<sup>103</sup>

Newspapers variedly referred to returning members as men 'who cultivated lush beards and moustaches' (in the 1950s and 1960s) or 'hippies' (1970s).<sup>104</sup> In his memoir Van der Merwe remarked that; 'Beards grew, some thick and black, other only feathery tufts that blew in the wind like drought stricken blades of grass.'<sup>105</sup> Van der Merwe, an astute observer of people, also wrote an article on the matter. The article, lightly but not exclusively tongue-in-the-cheek, was called 'Overdressing and overgrowth of beard in Antarctica.' In it, Van der Merwe he remarked that, 'unfortunately the wildest growth attracts the newspaper photographer and is furthermore encouraged in South Africa which presents a cup for the biggest beard. Such publicity publicises genetic traits, and not necessarily supremacy in scientific or technological achievement.'<sup>106</sup> Thus, for Van der Merwe at least, beards might not be a marker of masculine achievement, but, implicitly, scientific or technological achievement was.

As mentioned earlier, one of the more noticeable stratifications in the small Antarctic research communities was between scientific and non-scientific personnel, between the scientists who received the recognition and prestige on the mainland, and the support staff, who often

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<sup>101</sup> Bizarrely, this competition was recently revived. Lize Swartz, "Suid-Afrika 'is soos 'n ander wêreld' ná Antarktika," *Die Burger* (17 February 2011). The bearded man as the 'Antarctic pioneer' has not disappeared either, a recent film of the building of the South African base in 1997, called 'Antarctica Ice World Pioneers' were full of imagery of men with (often frozen) beards. The tagline of the film, 'An epic story of human survival, perseverance and achievement in a merciless wasteland' further entrenched the idea of man's conquering over nature. Waterston Entertainment, "Antarctica, Ice World Pioneers," (2007).

<sup>102</sup> In Afrikaans, the expression 'hardebaard' that literally translates as 'hard beard' (as opposed to 'melkbaard, which colloquially translates to 'fuzz'). It is also used idiomatically to describe 'men's men' or tough men. Christopher Oldstone-Moore, "The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain," *Victorian Studies*, 48, 1 (Autumn, 2005) and Sandra Swart, "'A Boer and His Gun and His Wife Are Three Things Always Together': Republican Masculinity and the 1914 Rebellion," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24,4 (December 1998).

<sup>103</sup> On beards as an affirmation of masculinity, see Micheal S. Kimmel, "Globalization and its Mal(e)contents: The Gendered Moral and Political Economy of Terrorism," Micheal S. Kimmel, Jeff Hearn, R.W. Connell, eds., *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005), 428.

<sup>104</sup> "Manne met lang haarlokke terug in S.A.," *Die Volksblad* (19 February 1963), "Suidpoolspan laat hawe soos hippieland lyk," *Volksblad* (26 February 1972).

<sup>105</sup> Van der Merwe, *Die Wit Horison*, 45.

<sup>106</sup> A. le R, van der Merwe, "Overdressing and overgrowth of beard in Antarctica," *Antarctic Bulletin*, 20 (March 1967).

became the main status bearers on Antarctica itself.<sup>107</sup> La Grange's advice that the non-scientist should be made to feel that he is doing something of 'great scientific importance', quoted earlier in the chapter, was a case in point.<sup>108</sup> The 'non-scientists' were aware of the status allocated to 'the scientist' or at least weight lent to certifiable qualifications. Chris de Weerd, the diesel mechanic on the first SANAE team, remembered his interview for the post thus:

'Nevertheless, I sat there, between all the clever guys. And the one guy says he has a BSc in mechanical engineering, and that guy is so and the other guy has that... And they all can go home... But then came the person in the white jacket and says, look, it does not matter if you are the friend of the Minister or the friend of this guy or the friend of that guy, here it is a matter of life and death, the guy who pass this [practical test], is the guy that goes.'<sup>109</sup>

In a sense then the environment of the Antarctic was seen as an equaliser – or even a space where the status quo could be reversed. De Weerd was also seconded to the only team member that was a career scientist, Vic von Brunn, as the latter was physically weaker than the rest. This idea of the reversal of the status quo because of the hostile nature of Antarctica has been enduring. In his account of his visit to Antarctica as South Africa's first writer-in-residence, the journalist Don Pinnock retells an conversation with one of the drivers. The drivers were responsible for transporting the cargo from the ship to the base, working in arduous conditions and long shifts. Pinnock asked him whether he did not get tired from the job to which he replied: 'Ja, sure, but at least we are outside, not sitting in that hotel on the hill. *This* is Antarctica [...] All those scientists and important guys who sit in the base and plan things, they'd be in deep shit without us.'<sup>110</sup> The 'real

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<sup>107</sup> This division is not unique to South Africa, on American Antarctic bases, for example, there are three 'classes', namely 'outdoor people' (trades), 'indoor people' (technicians) and 'beakers' (scientists). Christy Collis and Quentin Stevens, "Cold Colonies: Antarctic Spatialities at Mawson and McMurdo stations," *Cultural Geographies* 14 (2007), 248. Currently, the South African Antarctic base is often, but by no means always, stratified as follows, more or less in order of social status (and not actual authority): those belonging to an overwintering team, the 'drivers' (responsible for transporting the cargo from the ship to the base, usually from the military), 'Titan' (the helicopter pilots) and 'PWD' (the men from the National Department of Public Works). Depending on who you ask, the bottom rung is shared by DEAT (the administrative personnel from the government department), and the 'loslappies' (scientists).

<sup>108</sup> La Grange, "The requirements and nature of logistic support," 24.

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Chris de Weerd, Pretoria (1 March 2010).

<sup>110</sup> Don Pinnock, *Blue Ice: Travels in Antarctica* (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2005), 79. On my visit I met some of the drivers Pinnock referred to, who felt that they were not informed that they will be quoted and was in any case misquoted. They subsequently went to pains to explain that they think everyone has an equally important role to play on Antarctica when asked about it. The dominant discourse remains, however,

men' physically encountered the dangers of the Antarctic environment, the outside – and as such had what was deemed a more *authentic* experience.<sup>111</sup> In his subsequent comment on his experience with the drivers, Pinnock explicitly genders the bodies and ability of the drivers:

'I look at my two travelling companions in the Challenger noticing their broad shoulders and the ripple of muscles under their T-shirts. Back home you'd be awfully polite to such types in a bar because their irritation might cost you dearly. But they're considerate and comfortably able. I realise I'd far rather trust my life to a John or a Gary before a Robert Falcon Scott.'<sup>112</sup>

### ***The Antarctic Crossing the Line Ceremony***

Another way a visitor to Antarctica won authenticity was through the crossing the line ceremony as one passed the Antarctic circle. It is unclear when South Africans started performing the ceremony on voyages to Antarctica, but it was not performed on the first number of voyages. By the time South Africa acquired the *SA Agulhas* in 1978, it was 'a tradition' and regularly performed, although it was unlikely that it would have been performed on non-routine voyages, as these were often subjected to time constraints.<sup>113</sup> The ceremony was based on a variety of the naval crossing-the-line ceremony at the equator, which in its modern form can be traced back to at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century and remained popular even after the Second World War in several western navies, and was also performed in the South African Navy.<sup>114</sup> On passenger leisure cruises, toned down versions of the ceremony

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especially that of people who stay in base never experiencing Antarctica and the drivers being the tough manly men.

<sup>111</sup> In informal conversation, the idea was often relayed that many of the DEA personnel were not qualified to run the Antarctic programme as they have not overwintered and have not spent time *outside*. Particularly controversial was the implementation of a new Adventure Policy, which prohibited adventure sports (including snow-boarding, abseiling and kite-surfing) for fear of another death (in 2009 a team member died in a freak abseiling accident). Many muttered that the department had no idea what it was like overwintering and should regulate adventure activities and provide training, rather than forbid it. The debate lies outside the scope of the current dissertation, but reaffirms the perception that having experienced and coped with the *outside* gives real authority.

<sup>112</sup> Pinnock, *Blue Ice*, 79.

<sup>113</sup> As confirmed by Captain William (Bill) Leith. Interview with William Leith, Cape Town (26 January 2012).

<sup>114</sup> The ceremony has probably evolved from Viking rituals when crossing certain parallels. It was first banned by the Dutch East India in the seventeenth century, probably because of the potential for injuries. Archibald B. Campbell, *Customs and Traditions of the Royal Navy: With Chapters on the Royal Marines, the Women's Royal Naval Service, Naval Decorations and Medals*, (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1956), 38 and Simon J. Bronner, *Crossing the Line: Violence, Play and Drama in Naval Equator Traditions* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press –Meertens Ethnology Lecturers, 2006), 33 and Paul Weaver, "Navy Crosses

were celebrated as entertainment for the passengers. The basic narrative revolves around trespassing into King Neptune's kingdom, and all of those who have not crossed the circle previously (called Pollywogs) had to go through certain rites to punish them for trespassing on the one hand, and to make them worthy sea men (Shellbacks) on the other.<sup>115</sup> On the South African vessel the ceremony was usually organised by the ship's (coloured) crew and was conducted in a playful manner. Apart from the safety drill it was the one event in which the whole ship's complement (officers, crew and passengers) participated. It was also organised by members of the crew, serving as an equalization measure, at least between those who have been there and those have not as well as to relieve social tension. After the Saturnalian role-reversal of the ceremony, order was restored again. The antics on the South African vessel was a much watered down version of the crossing-of-the-line ceremony at the equator that inspired it<sup>116</sup> and was not nearly taken to the same extent the ceremonies caused a scandal in the Royal Australian Navy in 1997.<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, it was underpinned by similar discourses of male bonding and tensions between homoeroticism and homophobia.<sup>118</sup> The night before the ceremony, the ships' captain and another senior person acted out a script over the intercom system between Davy Jones, as a messenger from King Neptune and the captain. That evening the initiates, who have been told about the ceremony on the voyage south as the distance between them and the mainland widened, are visited in their cabins by men disguised as Davy Jones and Neptune's bears. The initiates are told to lay prostrate on the ground and are then spanked on the bottom with oars and plastic tubes. In the earlier decades, these initiates (crew, officers and passengers alike) were also stripped to their underwear, although that practice was later abandoned. Unsurprisingly Davy Jones and the bears were usually played by the more physically fit and popular men, especially the drivers, pilots and construction workers. In a very literal way, they demonstrated their dominance over the juvenilized initiates lying prostrate and vulnerable on the ground.

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the Line with Anal Antics," *Quarterly Newsletter of the Australian Association for Maritime History* 76 (1999), 13.

<sup>115</sup> For an exposition of the whole narrative see Bronner, *Crossing the Line*.

<sup>116</sup> For a fluent and critical description of the ceremony as practiced by the US Navy at the equator, see Carrie Little Hersh, "Crossing the Line: Sex, Power, Justice and the U.S. Navy at the Equator," *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy* 9, 277 (2002), 281 – 293.

<sup>117</sup> In 1997, video material was aired on Australian national television of initiation rituals on the *HMS Onslow* following the crossing-the-line narrative that involved physical torture, sexual harassment and rape with objects. The ensuing uproar also caused the US Navy across the Pacific to issue a formal instruction on the matter. Weaver, "Navy Crosses the Line with Anal Antics," 13 and S.J. Bronner, "Sailor Men," *National Sexuality Resource Center, San Francisco State University* (18 June 2007) at [http://nsrc.sfsu.edu/article/sailor\\_men\\_homoerotic\\_rituals](http://nsrc.sfsu.edu/article/sailor_men_homoerotic_rituals).

<sup>118</sup> Hersh, "Crossing the Line," 278 and Bronner, "Sailor Men."

The next day the initiates gather on deck to have their sins read out to them and pass through a ritual attended by King Neptune and his Queen, the latter also played by a man often crossed-dressed with plastic naked breasts. The initiates were hosed down with water before each individually having their sins read out (usually these make reference to certain characteristics or events on the voyage thus far). The initiate then went through a series of rituals which involved being covered in eggs and flour, having a toilet seat hung around their neck, and an oats mixture rubbed in their face (possibly a scatological version of homoerotic ‘Kissing the Royal Baby’ in the equatorial ceremony).<sup>119</sup> Finally, after consuming something containing capsaicinoids (like chillies), the initiate was dunked by members of the crew in sea-water that were pumped on deck. After the ceremony, the initiates received a certificate according them membership of the ‘Royal and Ancient Order of the Antarctic Fellows,’ confirming their status of now being part of an elite few who had withstood the journey to Antarctica. If the weather allowed, the new members were welcomed with a celebratory braai, or barbeque, on deck.<sup>120</sup>

The ceremony, writes Bonner ‘enacts the penetration into a new mythological zone, often viewed as dangerous and mysterious, leaving behind the familiar realm of home to create a reversed, divided world.’<sup>121</sup> A analogous conclusion can be reached about the Antarctic environment – when the initiates passed through the ceremony they too find themselves in an unfamiliar world, frequently portrayed as mysterious, an environment that is disorientating and dangerous.<sup>122</sup>

### ***Sexing the Antarctic***

Not all performances of masculinity were cloaked in ceremonies and metaphors. References to sexuality and (heterosexual) sex on the women-less research bases were often direct and crude. This was probably most visible in idiosyncratic interior decoration: pornographic

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<sup>119</sup> In this version the “Baby” usually has a huge stomach covered with greasy materials ranging from cooking oil to mustard, shaving cream, eggs, and oysters. Junior sailors must lick the Baby’s navel area, while the Baby grabs and shakes their head to better smear the goo onto their faces.” It simulated homosexual fellatio and the question arises whether it ‘indicates sailor attraction to, or ridicule of, homosexual activity,’ given the public view of sailors as the ‘most feminized’ of military men, given the domestic tasks of ‘washing and sewing’ on a navy ship and the suspicions of homosexuality given the close bonds that form on remote vessels at sea. Bronner, “Sailor Men.”

<sup>120</sup> This description was based on observations during my field trip to Antarctica as well as numerous informal conversations; interviews, including Niel Malan, Pretoria, (16 March 2010); Jay le Roux, Pretoria, (3 March 2010); Bill Leith, Cape Town, (26 January 2011) and photos from some of the private collections, including Harm Moraal, ALP.

<sup>121</sup> Bronner, *Crossing the Line*, 8.

<sup>122</sup> For more on the disorientating effects of the Antarctic landscape, see William L. Fox, *Terra Antarctica: Looking into the Emptiest Continent* (Berkeley, CA: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2007), 18, 21.

images of women stuck up against the base walls. Pornography was only legalised in South Africa in 1996, but that did not prevent men from acquiring it.<sup>123</sup> South Africa has been a sexually conservative state, but were not completely isolated from the cultural revolution, which also affected ideas about sexual freedom, in the Western world during the 1960s. The pin-up girls of the 1960s were noticeably more clothed than those of the 1980s, but the extent to which pornographic pictures were allowed in the base (if at all) also depended on the leadership and composition of a specific team.<sup>124</sup> In pictures from the late 1970s until 2009 at least, the base at Marion contained many of these objects. On a field visit in 2009, the walls of the mammal laboratory were bedecked with aged framed pictures of scantily clad women and seals alike. Besides the cat-skins and ‘souvenired’ brass from a shipwreck, a naked female figurehead was mounted on the wall in the ‘Tit and Fanny Bar’.<sup>125</sup> In the absence of female bodies, men surrounded themselves with objects reminding them of female bodies. One artefact was particularly revealing about how the men expressed the absence of women in sexual terms, a notebook in which conversations and aphorisms were written down which can usually be found near the bar.<sup>126</sup> It contained frequent references to masturbation, including the role pornography played.<sup>127</sup> Female genitalia was also referred to, especially its absence and often in crudely pejorative terms. One such quote is especially loaded with references to the state of the young white male in South Africa in the late 1980s: ‘Cunt is a rumour that was spread by the communists to make your brains rot. And the other communist

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<sup>123</sup> During apartheid, the Censorship Board controlled what could be published in South Africa. A magazine like *Scope* could operate legally with Board approval. If the stars were too small, that issue would be banned. The Films and Publications Act 65 of 1996 officially legalised pornography. No. 65 of 1996: FILMS AND PUBLICATIONS ACT, 1996. Available at <http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=70901> and personal communication, Sarah Duff and Schalk van der Merwe, (1 October 2011).

<sup>124</sup> It was, for example, pin-up pictures were disallowed by the leader of the first SANAE team, but were present in the third team. By the 1980s, however, it was a common occurrence. Interviews with Chris de Weerd, Pretoria, (1 March 2010); Johan van der Merwe, Pretoria, (5 March 2010); Private Collections of , André du Plessis and William Leith, ALP; Bar Quote Book from the 1980s, Diaries, letters and personal, SANAE IV, ALP; Informal conversations, Marion Island (April 2009).

<sup>125</sup> Personal observation, April 2009. The maidenhead has been there some time according to construction workers from the Public Works. It was moved to the new base that was opened in 2011. John Cooper enquired whether the sign should not be moved to a museum rather, seeing that it was a dated relic and sexist. He was told ‘this needs to be discussed at length with Henry, Adriaan (new base Project Leader) and other SANAP participants and all other relevant parties.’ The e-mail series was about erecting a sign designating Marion as a Special Nature Reserve and RAMSAR wetland site, which did not seem to be much of a bureaucratic issue at all. E-mail correspondence with usual government disclaimer (5 August 2011).

<sup>126</sup> These musings were likely mostly pinned down when the author was in an inebriated state. Moreover, the intended audience was probably only those involved, and to the amusement of those who subsequently spent time at the base. Thus these anecdotes were probably deliberately exaggerated. This does not, however, invalidate their meaning.

<sup>127</sup> ‘I’ll say one thing for porn, it does enhance wanking!’ Bar Quote Book, c. 1983, Documents: Research base material, SANAE diaries, letters and personal, ALP.

plot is Bles Bridges.’<sup>128</sup> Bles Bridges was a popular but much derided Afrikaans crooner, nicknamed after his early baldness and more popular among women than men. The hypermasculine is not only evident in the derogatory mention of female genitalia, but also in the reference to communism and Bles Bridges. During the 1980s the apartheid-era government under P.W Botha was at the apogee of its communist paranoia, and enlistment in the military was compulsory for all young white men, who were then sent to the Angolan border to fight the communists.<sup>129</sup>

Sexual encounters between men were relegated to the realm of the unspeakable. They were the subject of only one or two of the quotes – and then in such a the humorous intent (and not actual intent) was clear.<sup>130</sup> There was a homosexual team member on the second South African Antarctic expedition, spoken about off-the-record and with furtive glances.<sup>131</sup> If ‘homosexual tendencies’ came up during psychological testing, the application was summarily rejected.<sup>132</sup> Cross-dressing, or rather drag, however, was not uncommon.<sup>133</sup> First there was the cross-dressing of at least one prominent member of the complement during the crossing-the-line ceremony. On the Marion Island Base, the 1980s saw ‘Maid Marion’ competitions, a mock beauty pageant where the men would dress up in drag.<sup>134</sup> Cross-dressing can also be interpreted as a confirmation of masculinity, ridiculing the female body whilst displaying confidence that in drag, the men would not be mistaken for effeminate.

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<sup>128</sup> The Afrikaans pejorative used, ‘poes’, is as crude, sexist and odious as its English counterpart. Bar Quote Book, c. 1988, Documents: Research base material, SANAE diaries, letters and personal, ALP.

<sup>129</sup> The ‘Border-War’ was one of the hot wars of the Cold War manipulated by the Soviets and the Americans, involving Cubans, South Africans, Namibians and Angolans, and left a decades long Civil War in its wake. See Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) especially chapter six. The impact it had on the white male psyche was the subject of a cathartic public debate, the ‘Boetman debate’ amongst Afrikaners in the early 2000s. Melissa E Steyn, ‘Rehabilitating a whiteness disgraced: Afrikaner *white talk* in post-Apartheid,’ *Communication Quarterly* 52,2 (2004) 143 -169.

<sup>130</sup> Another sign that the various authors were aware of the public nature of the quotes and intended that they should be read (and admired?) by subsequent visitors.

<sup>131</sup> One team member confirmed it on the record, but told most of the story off-the-record, Interview with Dick Bonnema, Swellendam, (5 August 2010).

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Oubaas Jooste, Bloemfontein, (29 March 2010).

<sup>133</sup> It was also common during the voyage in which I participated. It was usually the ‘alpha-men’ with a military background that started cross-dressing and was then joined by the much younger group of engineers that hero-worshipped them.

<sup>134</sup> See, for example Marion Collection: Living on the Island, 1980s.



Figure 6. 1: The bar sign at the previous Marion-base that read 'Tit and Fanny bar.' Note the hypermasculine pictures above the sign. The left picture implied successful mass consumption of alcohol, leading to 'prohibition.' In the centre, the picture played on the right-wing image of skinheads and on the right the cathunters were depicted as a team of big game hunters, their guns cocked and ready.

*Source: Marion Base Pictures, ALP.*

Although there might be nuanced differences, the banter about sex and the objectification of women was not necessarily more characteristic of the women-less state of the Antarctic research base more than it was of, for example, all-male combat teams in the military. A custom where the Antarctic environment – and its extreme elements – figured centrally, was that of streaking. It was not a custom unique to the South African base but had been done on SANAE at least since the late 1960s.<sup>135</sup> The men (and much later some women as well) would strip down to their shoes and run naked either to a designated spot or around the base. Aside from the erotic undertones of naked communion with nature (despite the physical

<sup>135</sup> For other instances see Megan McNaught, 'Antarctica's nudist club' *The Mercury* (24 June 2010); Deborah Zabarenko, 'South Pole's 300 Club not for the cold-blooded.' *Reuters* (13 December 2006) at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2006/12/13/oukoe-uk-antarctica-300club-idUKN1341483220061213> and 'Polar Traditions: The 300 Club' *The South Pole* at <http://hotgates.stanford.edu:3455/SouthPole/586> (Accessed 20 January 2012).

effects of the cold), it was also a custom that in a playful way demonstrated resilience and physical strength. Perhaps even more, it was an acknowledgement of the fact that it is a severe environment. It was a feat to be accomplished, as one person remarked after sending up a radiosonde in the nude, ‘after today our names will be mentioned in the same breath than Scott and Amundsen.’<sup>136</sup>

### **‘Five women invade male continent’<sup>137</sup>**

What happened when women started to be physically present in Antarctica? Following the pattern set by the Soviets, Americans, Australians and New Zealanders, the first women allowed to journey south went only for the summer. Apart from the two newly-weds, for most other countries, the ‘first women’ were often stewardesses on ships and planes. By the late 1970s, Australia, New Zealand and France started allowing women, albeit with caveats. Some were implicit; the first woman to overwinter on the New Zealand base did so with her husband. Other rules were explicit; women initially had to be over forty to apply to overwinter on French stations, an age at which it was assumed they would be older than many of the male staff and sexually unavailable.<sup>138</sup>

It was not that women scientists were not interested in Antarctica. An early example was Edna Plumstead, a geologist at the University of Cape Town, who wrote ground-breaking articles on Antarctic fossils and geology in the 1950s.<sup>139</sup> Given the time period, the fact that she could not conduct her own field research was not even mentioned. It is not known exactly who was the first South African woman to visit Antarctica.<sup>140</sup> It was only in the 1980s that the overwhelmingly male policy makers slowly and reluctantly started allowing women to participate in voyages. The first visits that were widely acknowledged and reported, were by

<sup>136</sup> Bar Quote Book, c. 1988, Documents: Research base material, SANAE diaries, letters and personal, ALP.

<sup>137</sup> The Afrikaans title, “Vyf vroue dring manlike vasteland binne” can also be translated as ‘five women penetrate male continent.’ “Vyf vroue dring manlike vasteland binne,” *Volksblad* (April 1981).

<sup>138</sup> The first women overwinterers at Dumont D’Urville (a continental base) in 2000 were said to have been successfully integrated into the team because they were older and ‘we were not sexually attracted to them.’ Quoted in Elizabeth Rosnet, Sylvie Jurion, Geneviève Cazes and Claude Bachelard, “Mixed Gender Groups: Coping Strategies and Factors of Psychological Adaptation in a Polar Environment,” *Aviation, Space and Environmental Medicine* 75, 7 (July 2004) c10-c13.

<sup>139</sup> She was a colleague of Aleksander du Toit. She wrote *Three thousand million years of plant life in Africa* (Cape Town: Geological Society of South Africa, 1969) and presented a paper at the 1963 SCAR symposium on Geology in Cape Town. Arthur B Ford, “The Road to Gondwana via the Early SCAR Symposia,” Dieter Fütterer, *Antarctica: contributions to global earth sciences : proceedings of the IX International Symposium of Antarctic Earth Sciences* (Potsdam, 2003), 3.

<sup>140</sup> A First Day Cover would suggest it was Ethel Funk, wife of Captain Ernst Funk in 1979. The same year, Lesley Rickett, a woman research assistant at the University of Cape Town, signed the SANAE III guestbook. Philatelia, 1979, ALP and 1979 Guestbook, Documents: Research base material, SANAE diaries, letters and personal, ALP.

women whose husbands had sufficient influence and importance for their wives to accompany them on the summer trips, starting in the 1980/1981 season. These women were allowed to go not because they could contribute to South Africa's activities in Antarctica, but because their marital status.<sup>141</sup> They included the wife and daughters accompanying the captain, the wife of the first engineer, a diplomat and the director of the Antarctic Division of the Department of Transport.<sup>142</sup> In one article, the women were defined by age and number of children.<sup>143</sup> A more investigative article asked 'must foreigners be given priority over female citizens of South Africa because there are not enough men man enough for the adventure?'<sup>144</sup> The article, it should be noted, was published under a section 'For the Woman,' and not intended to be read by a wider audience or elicit debate across the gender divide. Amongst the women, the article remarked, there was an 'almost unanimous yes for equal women's rights.'<sup>145</sup> The men, 'each with his own harem of provoking paper dolls on base,' was almost equally unanimous in their rejection of 'dolls of flesh and blood.'<sup>146</sup> The article discussed the women's opinion of the potential impact of women on the base. The women commented that they thought women as capable of handling isolation. Moreover, they expressed the opinion that women will have a moderating influence on the men's behaviour. The potential danger, according to one of the women, was that unmarried, young women would become involved in a relationship with one of the men, which could lead to jealousy.<sup>147</sup>

In this 1981 article (and others) male bureaucrats and expedition leaders offered at least three reasons why women should not be allowed to overwinter: their presence would impact negatively on the men's morale and would lead to jealousies, they were not physically strong enough to do the labour and it would be expensive to adapt base to provide 'facilities' for women. They did not elaborate what these facilities were, or why women could not use existing 'facilities'.<sup>148</sup> As Tom Griffiths wrote in reference to similar arguments put forward by the Australians in the 1960s and 1970s: 'It all came down to bathrooms. It was as if

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<sup>141</sup> Marriage, in the 1980s, legally rendered wives subservient to their husbands in certain respects, most notably in terms of their ability to act as a legal person.

<sup>142</sup> "Vyf vroue ook na Antarktika," *Die Volksblad* (2 January 1981); "Vyf vroue dring manlike vasteland binne;" "Dié niemandsland nie vir evas," *Die Volksblad* (14 April 1981); Bruce Taylor, "Sewe vroue op ys altyd bewus van kleur," *Beeld* (8 April 1981).

<sup>143</sup> Taylor, "Sewe vroue op ys altyd bewus van kleur."

<sup>144</sup> "Dié niemandsland nie vir evas."

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> The idea that a married woman, or woman with children could overwinter was not raised. Women in both 'situations' have since overwintered on Marion Island and Gough Island. (Interview with Dineo Matsana, Pretoria (15 March 2010) and conversation with Mariette Wheeler, Pretoria, (19 June 2010)

<sup>148</sup> "Dié niemandsland nie vir evas."

women were a different species and “all-male facilities” were a natural, inviolable feature of the ice.’<sup>149</sup> The quarters were good enough for wives and mothers to visit, not women scientists to work in.

A couple of years after the wives-and-daughters visits, by the mid-1980s, three women were included as assistants on the summer expedition. One recounted how they were regarded with antipathy by some department officials who refused to give them the necessary training. In one particular incident, she recalled, they visited a workshop to familiarise themselves with the equipment they would have to operate on the ship. They were told that the one machine went ‘pring’ and another ‘chi-chang.’<sup>150</sup> A combination of carelessness and the refusal to train them properly led to a piece of expensive equipment being lost overboard.<sup>151</sup> A government official described that particular trip as ‘hellish’ and that two of the women were especially ‘wild.’<sup>152</sup> He added that the chief scientist implied the women were promiscuous.<sup>153</sup> The actions of the men involved (also in the ‘promiscuity’) did not come under similar scrutiny. Another women scientist, commenting on the matter, was of the opinion that ‘women who went to these remote bases had to realise they were entering a man’s world and that they has [sic] to be careful with their behaviour.’ She continued, ‘One is like an ambassador for one’s sex down there – you have to be very careful to treat one guy like the next.’<sup>154</sup> When asked about women joining Antarctic voyages, a public official’s immediate answer was ‘if you wanted to dance, you grab a broom and stand there in the middle and jive with someone else.’<sup>155</sup> For some men, women were dance partners first, professionals second. It would seem that, despite public protestations to the contrary, the threat was female sexuality, not incompetence.

Government officials told the women that they were not allowed to disembark at the ice-shelf.<sup>156</sup> Not all the men resented their presence, she remembered, the scientists became

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<sup>149</sup> Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence*, 215.

<sup>150</sup> Louise Muller, telephone conversation, (1 October 2011).

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. and Interview with Dirk van Schalkwyk, Pretoria (11 October 2010).

<sup>152</sup> He used the Afrikaans expression ‘nag’, which translates directly as ‘night’, Interview with Dirk van Schalkwyk, Pretoria (11 October 2010).

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Dirk van Schalkwyk, Pretoria (11 October 2010).

<sup>154</sup> Helena Patten, “Women on ice frozen out – two ‘blew it,’” *The Argus* (24 November 1989); “Fair sex to invade man’s last icy domain.”

<sup>155</sup> Interview with Adriaan Dreyer, Pretoria (3 March 2010). He also continuously referred to women joining Antarctic cruises as *girls* or *girltjies* (an Anglicism with an Afrikaans diminutive.)

<sup>156</sup> The departmental official was overruled by the general in charge of the helicopter pilots and crew and the women visited the base. They were, however, not allowed to stay over during Christmas, although they were invited. Apparently ‘the situation’ could not be trusted.

friends and the ship's personnel did their best to make them comfortable. It would seem that they were, however, always regarded as women before anything else. They were greeted with either enthusiastic hospitality or cold hostility.<sup>157</sup> Soon after their visit, in 1989, South Africa's women were banned from Antarctica.<sup>158</sup> Publically, the government denied that this was official policy, saying that it was due to practical considerations. The department stressed that 'sexism' 'formed no part of the country's no-women policy on the SA National Antarctic Expedition' [apostrophes in original] and that they were 'forbidden to leave the ship because there are no suitable quarters for them on SANAE.'<sup>159</sup> They also denied that the summer expedition elaborated upon above had anything to do with the decision.<sup>160</sup> Women would be, however, allowed to participate in Marion and Gough relief voyages, and would be allowed to overwinter 'provided there were at least two, preferably three women present.'<sup>161</sup> The rationale why women would only be allowed to overwinter in groups was, similar to the 'facilities' debate- were not elaborated upon. The scientists were unhappy with the department's decision. Whatever personal or moral issues individual scientists might have had with the question of gender equality and the department's take on it, their position was compounded by the fact that these programmes needed scientists, regardless of gender.<sup>162</sup>

The first woman to spend a considerable amount of time on a South African research station was there by accident. South African Christine Hänel, was shipwrecked on Marion with the *S.V. Tortore*, and stayed behind for a four month period. She later returned to Marion and Gough as a field assistant and conservation officer. According to Marietta Cawood, the first women scientist to overwinter on a South African research outpost (along with Marianna Steenkamp), Hänel's stay proved that mixed-gender teams were able to function efficiently and that women did not need special 'facilities.' Steenkamp, a biologist, needed to conduct lengthy field research on Marion and was allowed to overwinter provided she was accompanied by a female field assistant.<sup>163</sup> Despite Cawood's and Steenkamp's successful sojourn as scientists, the next women scientists to overwinter on Marion only did so in 1995.

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<sup>157</sup> Like being taken on a special trip to see Emperor penguins by the British when the *SA Agulhas* met up with the *R.R.S Bransfield*. Louise Muller, telephone conversation (1 October 2011).

<sup>158</sup> Patten, "Women on ice frozen out" and "SASCAR Southern Ocean TWG meeting," 7 June 1988, ALP, Private Collection, John Cooper.

<sup>159</sup> "Fair sex to invade man's last icy domain," *Sunday Times* (26 November 1989).

<sup>160</sup> Patten, "Women on ice frozen out;" "Fair sex to invade man's last icy domain."

<sup>161</sup> "SASCAR Southern Ocean TWG meeting," 7 June 1988, ALP, Private Collection, John Cooper.

<sup>162</sup> "Minutes of the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of the South African Committee for Antarctic Research, 16 November 1987," DIRCO 102/2/9/1 vol. 11.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Marietta Cawood, Bloemfontein (29 March 2010).

In the meantime, at least one woman scientist, who later came to occupy a prominent position, was denied the opportunity to conduct her own field research.<sup>164</sup>

There were also women who agreed that all-male teams were better and that men were more able to cope with the Antarctic environment and life.<sup>165</sup> Arguably, however, the consensus opinion would hardly be considered newsworthy and reported on – it was the opinion that women could and should be allowed to overwinter that was articulated as new and potentially controversial in the 1980s.<sup>166</sup>

The first woman to overwinter in Antarctica as part of South Africa's Antarctic Programme, only in 1995, was young, single and the sole woman to overwinter with the male team. She was not appointed in order to demonstrate how the department progressed in a post-apartheid, ostensibly non-discriminatory environment, although after her appointment much was made of the fact that she was 'breaking the ice' for women.<sup>167</sup> She was appointed because the department was desperate to find a qualified doctor willing to overwinter.<sup>168</sup>

### **Black Antarctica**

When a Soviet official asked her South African counterpart in the 1980s what his country's plan with Antarctica was, he replied with dark humour, 'we are going to keep Antarctica white.'<sup>169</sup> Of course, South Africa's Antarctica was never really just white.<sup>170</sup> The men who

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<sup>164</sup> Sue Jackson, an ornithologist, had to rely on data she collected during the brief summer expeditions for her doctoral dissertation, despite efforts made by senior scientists to persuade the authorities that she could and should overwinter. She was the first woman to be awarded a PhD based on research conducted on the Prince Edward Islands. Cooper, "Human History," 344.

<sup>165</sup> Jenny Darlington wrote in her memoir of the time that 'taking everything into consideration, I do not think women belong in the Antarctic.' Quoted in Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence*, 210.

<sup>166</sup> None of the women scientists or support personnel interviewed or spoken to informally regretted overwintering as a *woman* or would recommend other women against it. Typically, however, one would not expect people who did not enjoy their winter to stay in contact with fellow team members or to respond to calls for interviews that were framed in a positive light (see Introduction).

<sup>167</sup> Ntabiseng Ramponeng, "Intrepid doctor warms to daunting Antarctic challenge," *Saturday Star* (30 November 1996); Ntabiseng Ramponeng, "Doctor gets ready for her Antarctic streak ordeal," *Saturday Argus* (30 November 1996); Cornia Pretorius, "Dokter breek Antarktika-ys vir vroue," *Beeld* (18 December 1996); "Blonde dokter breek ys vir SA vroue met ekspedisie na Antarktika," (18 December 1996).

<sup>168</sup> Jack Viviers, "Gesok: 'n Arts met vuur in sy are vir yskoue Antarktika: SA ekspedisie na die Suidpool in gevaar," *Rapport* (15 September 1996)

<sup>169</sup> Anecdote related by Denzil Miller, South Africa's chief scientific representative at CCAMLR during the 1980s. Apparently she laughed before the translator had a chance to speak, unwittingly demonstrating her grasp of English. Conversation, 4 December 2010, Washington DC.

<sup>170</sup> Racial categorisation in South Africa is everything but black and white. The population classification Act of 1950, that was repealed in 1991, was notoriously ambiguous, for example classifying a white person as someone who 'in appearance is obviously a white person who is generally not accepted as a coloured person; or is generally accepted as a white person and is not in appearance obviously a white person.' Coloured referred to people of 'mixed race' origin (including slaves, Europeans, Khoisan and black African). 'Coloured people' were largely either Muslim or Christian, spoke Afrikaans or English as mother tongue,

served as crew on the RSA and later the S.A. Agulhas were mostly drawn from the coloured population, the seamen of South Africa's fishing industry.<sup>171</sup> They were, however, the invisible visitors to Antarctica, not interviewed in the contemporary press and receiving very little attention or recognition for the often high-risk role they played in getting the scientists there.<sup>172</sup> In the 1960s, race in South Africa, through the concerted efforts of the apartheid government, was conflated with class. A variety of apartheid structures, including job colour-bars and 'Bantu-education' (which gave blacks a limited and second-class education) meant that very few blacks would have had the opportunity to become scientists, let alone represent the country in Antarctica. It was already seen, in chapter five, how the Soviets made the point that scientific universalism did not apply within South Africa even though the country was included on an international platform on the basis of scientific universalism. In the context of South Africa then, the exclusion of blacks, coloureds and Indians from the South African Antarctic programme in any other role than labourer was taken for granted. As a topic of discussion it only surfaced in metaphors or superficial references to (physical) colour, as the apartheid-penguin cartoons illustrated in chapter four. Early team members, when asked about race, remembered how they jested how black people will 'melt' into Antarctica, similar to the way a black plastic bag absorbing heat from the sun would cause the surrounding snow to melt.<sup>173</sup>

By the early 1980s, it was not only the coloured men in the forecastle that made the journey to Antarctica, and worked on the ice-shelf, but coloured artisans formed part of the team from the Department of Public Works who did building maintenance in Antarctica.<sup>174</sup> The fact that

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westernised and culturally close to Afrikaners. Black people referred to black Africans. When used in this chapter, 'black', 'white' and 'coloured' are necessarily used in the historical context, and not as universally accepted categories. These categories are still applied in South Africa today in terms of employment equity and redressing past imbalances. A 'quota-system,' whereby each team should have a certain proportion of generically black (which in this sense, include coloured, Indian and Chinese South Africans) members is promoted by the South African Antarctic Programme, but is unpractical due to a complex set of factors that include a lack of skills, better paid work elsewhere and ignorance about the programme.

<sup>171</sup> Van Sittert, "Antarctic History from Below."

<sup>172</sup> Early New Zealand expeditions included Maoris in similar nameless roles. Generally though, trajectories of the histories of race with South Africa and New Zealand were so divergent that attempts at analogy would be rendered anachronistic.

<sup>173</sup> In the post-apartheid context of extreme racial sensitivity, this was often recounted off-the-record in a conspirational manner that implied that I, a white Afrikaans woman, would agree with the 'humour' behind the anecdote. In informal conversation, white interviewees (scientists as well as technical personnel) would surprisingly often allege that black people get cold easier and therefore do not like going to Antarctica. There is certainly no scientific or even cultural basis for this assumption. Black interviewees, in fact, hardly ever mentioned cold as factor Interviews with Dineo Matsana, Pretoria (15 March 2010); Dora Scott with Shadrack Podile, Marion Island (25 April 2011). Also Interview with Shorty Terreblanche, Virginia (21 March 2010);

<sup>174</sup> Interview with Kim Gierdien, Cape Town (17 August 2010).

coloured people were preferred above black African people reflected the racial hierarchies in South Africa. Within the confines of the ship, and especially the base, these workers and the scientists lived in close proximity but they largely socialised in separate groups. This pattern, where maintenance personnel formed a different group from scientists, was not unique to the South African base on Antarctica.<sup>175</sup> By the 1980s, the first coloured scientists, benefiting from improved education and less restricted access to universities, were allowed to work on the Agulhas.<sup>176</sup> The first coloured team member in a skilled profession was a meteorologist, Gerald Meyer, who was sent to Marion Island rather than Antarctica itself (as were the first women).<sup>177</sup> He joined the team for the 1990-1 season.<sup>178</sup>

From 1995 onwards the government actively tried to recruit black South Africans as scientists and maintenance personnel, through adherence to employment equity (or affirmative action) laws, but also through incentives such as designated scholarships.<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, post-apartheid, it was not so much the visits of black South African scientists and maintenance workers that were fêted, but rather the exploits of black men who fit into the mould of the white explorers of the Heroic Age through a series of firsts –including the first to the South Pole, first to do an unassisted trek and so on. They literally had to walk in the footsteps of white men to prove their worth. They received merit for being able to do what was done before and little was made of the fact that they previously were actively excluded from the White Continent. African participation became overtly politicised. In 1996 the *Sowetan* announced that Ronald Maleka would be the first black South African ‘the go to the South Pole,’ chosen as a team of 35 young explorers to represent their country.<sup>180</sup> Another proposal mirrored the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic expedition rhetoric of a trek that

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<sup>175</sup> On the American bases, for example, there are the ‘outdoor people (trades), ‘indoor people’ (technicians) and ‘beakers’ (scientists). In MacMurdo the class distinctions are more strictly drawn in terms of accommodation, for example. Mawson, an Australian station, is more egalitarian in its room allocation, there is nevertheless a social-distinction between the ‘boffins’ (scientists) and the ‘tradies’ (maintenance personnel). Christy Collins and Quentin Stevens, “Cold colonies: Antarctic spatialities at Mawson and McMurdo stations,” *Cultural Geographies* 14 (2007), 232-254. According to Dr Justine Shaw, who have spent time on both South African and Australian research stations (Macquarie and the Prince Edward Islands), the separation is more marked on South African stations.(Conversation, Marion Island, April 2009).

<sup>176</sup> One of the first ‘coloured’ oceanographers to work on the programme was Henry Valentine, who was an oceanographer with the CSIR. He is currently director of Department of Environmental and Water Affairs, Directorate: Antarctica and Islands. Interview with Henry Valentine, Cape Town (18 August 2010).

<sup>177</sup> The first ‘coloured’ people known to have spent any length of time on the Prince Edward Islands, were the Tristan Islanders in 1948 to help with the construction of the base. The team following them had two Cape coloured labourers, who were not included in the team photos and whose names were not mentioned in press accounts. Also see “Bruine eerste keer saam na Marion Eiland,” *Die Burger* (30 March 1989).

<sup>178</sup> Interview, Dora Scott with Nico Avenant, Bloemfontein (30 March 2010).

<sup>179</sup> Interview with Henry Valentine, Cape Town (18 August 2010).

<sup>180</sup> Charity Bhengu, “The first black S African to go to the South Pole,” *Sowetan* (13 August 1996).

displayed the masculine vigour of a political entity through the mental and physical challenge of an Antarctic Trek. The chosen team was to be ‘representative of our racial diversity’ and the crossing ‘symbolic of the on-going struggle to achieve peace and unity in South Africa.’<sup>181</sup> Nelson Mandela, the patriarch of the new nation, was asked to be the patron of this expedition, which, ‘although recent expeditions have already achieved this goal... would be a first for South Africa and indeed Africa.’<sup>182</sup> The Department of Environmental Affairs thought that the expedition was rather rash and unwise, and recommended that the presidency not support the venture.<sup>183</sup>

## Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was two-fold. It started with an overview of the role of science in the history of South Africa and Antarctica. It demonstrated how, in the South African context, the value of science changed over time, change that was not linear but multifaceted. It was not a one-way relationship, with the government dictating every detail of the form and content of scientific activity nor did the scientists operate independently from the state. The values attached to Antarctica, as a geographic space, as an environment, also shifted: at times it was a place of untold wealth, of nuclear deterrence, or a supposedly pristine wilderness.

The second part of this chapter concentrated on the human face of the ‘scientific presence’ in Antarctica. The chapter drew on interviews as well as archival material and newspaper accounts, using the categories of gender and race to interrogate the master narrative of Antarctica as a continent of heroic white men. Antarctica was probably the last continent, the last locality where fantasies of white masculinities could be played out. In the small community of Antarctica it was tempting for some white men, especially white civil servants whose position was threatened by rapid changes in South Africa from both a gender and race perspective between the mid-1980s and in the immediate post-apartheid era, to act like gods.

The Antarctic environment, harsh, dangerous and alien, contrasted with the domestic confinement of the Antarctic research base. It brought to the surface and magnified existing gender tropes. The White Continent also lent itself well to commentary on race relations in

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> The Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism used scepticism over the proposed expedition’s compliance with environmental regimes to dissuade the president’s office from accepting the proposition, but were also concerned about emergency evacuation procedures, which involved high risks and high costs. Director- General Environmental Affairs and Tourism to Director General, Foreign Affairs, “South African crossing of the Antarctic continent,” 2 April 1997, DIRCO BTS 102/2/7 vol.40

South Africa, and cartoonists in the English press in South Africa soon availed themselves of the opportunity to point this out in the 1950s. Their use of colour, however, reflected the domestic situation in South Africa and was not meant as commentary on the fact that black Africans were excluded from the Antarctic. Coloured Africans, on the other hand, were the invisible workers that literally got the white South Africans to Antarctica as ships' crew. By the 1980s coloured South Africans started to move into the passenger deck, one or two as scientists, others as skilled artisans. In some ways, however, Antarctica remained a space where Africans first had to prove themselves worthy of inclusion, to prove they could withstand the environment just as well as whites did. Sexism and racism was often as blunt as the Antarctic continent was cold.

## Conclusion

This dissertation focussed on a little-known South African island group and South African activities on the coldest, driest, highest, windiest continent of the world. Yet it was more than this. Through interrogating the state's involvement with these outlying places, it has also traced change over time at the centre of focus. It showed how the relationship between South Africa and the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic has been influenced by its changing relationship with the imperial and the colonial. It also reflected the changing values embedded in a supposedly neutral environment and its relationship with science as factors in South Africa's relationship with its southern neighbours. South Africa is the only African country with a presence in Antarctica and is the only African member of the Antarctic Treaty. This was pointed out in the 1960s and is still being mentioned today. The meaning of this statement has, however, changed significantly over the past 50 years.

Initially, in the early 1920s, South Africa's engagement with Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic was tenuous, with South Africa being merely a recipient of Foreign Office despatches. Attempts by scientifically minded men to involve South Africa in Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic were based on a particular interpretation of 'South Africanism' as a nationalism within an imperial milieu. South Africa became a self-governing state with the Act of Union in 1910, but its foreign policy remained closely tied to that of Britain. This began to change in the aftermath of the 1926 Imperial Conference, as chapter one explored, but at least until the Second World War, South Africa still followed Britain's lead in many matters. Britain asked South Africa in 1929 if it would have any objections to a Norwegian claim to Antarctica. The telegram to South Africa was a courtesy which South Africa accepted, not as a serious call to action from the metropole. Britain already had a policy in mind that would divert Norway's attention to the 'South African' sector, as it would be beneficial to Britain's imperial project in Antarctica. During this time, South Africa fitted Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic onto standing projects. It was seldom deliberately used to promote an explicit agenda. It was rather an extra tool to use towards other ends, for example in local battles against drought or regulating the whaling industry.

South Africa's occupation of the Prince Edward Islands in the aftermath of the Second World War was, however, not the result of simply following Britain's orders. Instead, it was South Africa's response to a new world order, where new enemies emerged with new weapons. The Islands fitted into a wider but not necessarily pronounced strategy of locating the Union as a

‘Western’ nation. As chapter two showed, the domestic reaction to the occupation demonstrated increased antipathy towards imperialism, but also an awareness that the military technologies wrought during the War would bring new kinds of technological empires. The lack of nationalistic fervour attached to this expansion of Union territory should be understood in the context of a hotly disputed election where Jan Smuts was severely disparaged for being a lackey to Empire.

In the post-War era, the state’s relationship with the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic was influenced by its having to find its feet in a world where the centres of gravity had shifted. When South Africa was excluded from the 1948 United States proposal, its indignant reaction was not only the result of a strategic interest in Antarctica, but also to being left out of an agreement that involved the emerging Western bloc as one in opposition to the communist East. Until the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition of 1956/1957, further attempts at remaining involved was largely based on the initiatives of individuals, who saw the utility of science in international diplomacy and tried to yield diplomacy as a tool to conduct science.

South Africa’s participation in the Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic expedition, as chapter three has argued, was not motivated by a need to support the Commonwealth, nor even an interest in the Antarctic as a discrete place. South Africa wanted to make just enough of a contribution to confirm that it was a legitimate player in the international arena, that it had the scientific clout. It was moreover a way in which to show where their loyalties lay in the Cold War context. The loan of Norway station in the wake of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) was a further act of legitimisation, especially as it became clear that the Soviet Union was going to be a key member of the Treaty. As such, it was also a response to the threat of another Soviet Station on the sector directly south of South Africa. The fear of a Soviet invasion from the country’s northern borders was deliberately used to stoke fear for an invasion from its south as well.

The ‘Scramble for Antarctica’ was an opportune metaphor at a time when the British Empire was being dismantled. It was, however, an inaccurate metaphor. Antarctica and the Islands were uninhabited and its resources, for the time being, hypothetical. Events during the 1950s were parades of power in an arena filled with ever more players. Antarctica was not excluded from the Cold War, in as much as tactics of deterrence were applied to Antarctica.

South Africa became increasingly isolated from the 1960s onwards. The focus shifted to the Antarctic Treaty as a multi-lateral platform. As Chapter Five demonstrated, the Prince

Edward Islands, although not officially within the Treaty area, were included in the plans to uphold South Africa's right to that platform, through the performance of science. For the scientists, the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS), through its scientific arm, the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), was a springboard to participate in international knowledge systems. This became gradually more important as the resource stakes were raised throughout the 1970s and the 1980s. Resource security became pivotal from the 1970s onwards; especially physical resources. Some resources, like the protein-filled krill and fish were already being exploited. Others, like hydrocarbons and hard minerals were not yet accessible, but the need for them was made clear by global resource crises of the 1970s and the 1980s. Knowledge production, whether about krill-swarms or geological structures, was a means to control access to resources as well as demonstrate environmental authority.

With the dismantling of apartheid, South Africa retained its presence in Antarctica and on the Prince Edward Islands. The language of ecosystems permeated politics. South Africa's commitment became justified in terms of 'biodiversity' and 'global warming' and playing a meaningful role in international decision-making bodies on these issues. In this sense, biodiversity and global warming were not abstract scientific concepts, but also related to resource security.

It was not only the apartheid regime that ended, but also the Soviet regime. Both the domestic and the international political landscape had changed. South Africa no longer needed to sustain Treaty activity to continue its membership to resource treaties such as CCAMLR. An 80-year embargo was put on mining with the Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection in 1991, and South Africa did not need the Treaty as a backdoor to multilateral negotiations. Yet, the ANC administration was keen to improve scientific skills among the black population who have been largely denied access to research universities in the past.

When South Africa was the only African country in Antarctica in the 1960s, it saw itself as a custodian of western science and values at the 'southern end of Africa,' facing a communist threat from all directions. In the post-apartheid milieu, South Africa's involvement in the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic has been taken as proof that it is a leading African state. It was in this light that the deputy-minister for Public Works, at the opening of the new research base on Marion Island, said that the research on Marion should showcase 'what the colleagues and

scientists that have weathered the weather in (sic) this island have done as we believe that the work done here continues to talk to, among others (sic) issues of climate change etc.’<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation has also shown how South African involvement with the Prince Edward Islands and Antarctica was very often not about the Prince Edward Islands and Antarctica. They were, however, not only passive casualties of foreign policy. The physical environment of the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic played a role in what they were able to mean to human activities such as science and international relations. Their isolation and harshness were understood as polar opposites: sometimes seen as stumbling blocks to overcome and, at other times, their most useful quality. Joachim Radkau remarked that environmental history:

...is invariably shaped by the formation of ever larger political and more expansive economic entities, and by the growing interconnectedness of the world. The geographic dimension of certain problems increases and the competency to deal with them is claimed by higher political levels: territories, nation-states and supranational institutions.<sup>2</sup>

The Antarctic and sub-Antarctic may be remote in distance and their environments alien to human eyes, but precisely those qualities made them prime sites to investigate the growing interconnectedness of the world.

The dissertation has demonstrated how, on the Prince Edward Islands, an increased interest in the natural environment of the Islands also changed views about their significance. The feline eradication programme exemplified how the South Africans began to regulate their footprint on the Island environment. Although the cat-hunting programme brought the scientists involved prestige amongst their sub-Antarctic peers, this did not translate to the broader South African public. The storm over the suggested landing strip however, had a wider impact, in the world-wide context of nuclear threats, depleting mineral resources and environmentalism. The Islands had to be kept as free of aliens, plant and animal, as possible, so that ecologies on the mainland could be better understood.

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<sup>1</sup> H. Bogopane-Zulu, “Marion Research Base opening address (sic) by the Deputy Minister of Public Works Hon Hendrietta Bogopane-Zulu, MP.” (18 March 2011)

<sup>2</sup> Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment* (Washington D.C: German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press, 2008), 9.

The human presence in Antarctica was shown to be worthy of ethnographic study. Drawing on archival as well as oral history, Chapter Seven used the analytical categories of gender and race to question the prevailing ‘hero’ narrative of Antarctica as the remaining realm of white men. The Antarctic setting, unforgiving, perilous and strange has stood in contrast with the domestic homeliness of the Antarctic base. It was one of the last places where men sought to re-enact and recount myths of white masculinities.

The relationship between science and the state in South Africa’s involvement with Antarctica was reciprocal. The government did not direct every facet of scientific activity nor did the scientists function autonomously. The values attached to Antarctica also changed: where it is now perceived as a place of ostensibly unspoiled beauty, it has been seen historically as a place of nuclear deterrence and immense riches.

This dissertation also contributed to Antarctic historiography. By writing about South Africa, more possibilities for transnational histories of the area opened up, much more, for example, can be written about the history of the southern ocean. It also demonstrated how a post-colonial history of Antarctica can be written about the engagement with Antarctica by a non-claimant state. Klaus Dodd’s call to treat the history of Antarctica within the framework of post-colonial studies has thus far been answered by studies of states with territorial claims on Antarctica.<sup>3</sup> This was a study of one of the original signatories of the Antarctic Treaty, a small country with a limited budget when compared to some fellow non-claimant Treaty members like Russia, the United States and Japan. In the 1980s, Malaysia’s challenge to the Treaty could be bolstered with support from African countries, partially because of South Africa’s position. South Africa was also to some extent a liability to the Treaty. It is doubtful, but not impossible that in the 1980s, the fact that South Africa was the only African country party to the Treaty would have carried much moral weight. More likely, major Treaty parties

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<sup>3</sup> For example Klaus Dodds on Britain, *Geopolitics in Antarctica: Views from the Southern Oceanic Rim* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1997); Klaus Dodds, *Pink Ice: Britain and the South Atlantic Empire* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002); Klaus Dodds and Kathryn Yussoff on New Zealand, “Settlement and unsettlement in Aotearoa/New Zealand,” *Polar Record*, 41, 217 (2005), 144-155; Peder Roberts on Norway and Britain (he also included Sweden, a non-claimant state) “Field of Frozen Dreams: Science, Strategy and the Antarctic in Norway, Sweden and the British Empire 1912-1952” (PhD dissertation, University of Stanford, Stanford, 2010); Brigid Hains on Australia, *The Ice and the Inland: Mawson, Flynn and the Myth of the Frontier* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002) and Adrian Howkins on Chile and Argentina, “Frozen Empires: A History of the Antarctic Sovereignty Dispute Between Britain, Argentina, and Chile, 1939-1959” (PhD dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2008) Howkins also wrote on to Antarctic imperialism by India, “Defending the polar empire: opposition to India’s proposal to raise the ‘Antarctic Question’ at the United Nations in 1956,” *Polar Record*, 44, 228 (2008), 35-44.

tolerated South Africa because they did not want to bow to international pressure. Despite this, South Africa managed to have an influence on the Antarctic Treaty System that was disproportionate to its means. South Africa had much more to lose if it were excluded from Antarctica. As a southern hemisphere state it was also much closer to Antarctica, which was significant in terms of maritime security. Post-apartheid, South Africa's research record on Marion Island specifically, continued to help it to, as a scientist recently put it 'punch above its weight in the geopolitical context of the vast and important Southern Ocean,' by helping South Africa to keep its commitments to the Antarctic Treaty.<sup>4</sup>

The sub-Antarctic and Antarctic in themselves might never have been a public or political priority for South Africa, yet, as this dissertation has shown, they were important sites in South African history. There are other avenues still to be explored. This dissertation revealed that the investigation of the active role South Africa played on multi-lateral platforms, (sometimes more, sometimes less successfully), can add a transnational dimension to histories of its isolation besides those of anti-apartheid movements or covert military support. A number of these forums such as the Antarctic Treaty System, related to environments that challenged traditional notions of nation-state sovereignty, by focusing on the ocean, the seabed and aerospace.<sup>5</sup> Much remains to be done in researching the ways in which science was used in the construction of nationalism. South Africa's Antarctic Programme, both on Antarctica and on the Prince Edward Islands has certainly been infused with nationalist discourse, as explained in chapter five and six, but the focus was more on South Africa's physical presence than the actual science. Moreover, the Prince Edward Islands and Antarctica never really gained public currency despite conscious state efforts to include the media, for example. This raises questions about the public perception of Antarctica and the Islands, as well as the Southern Ocean. In 2002 an editorial in *The South African Journal of Science* called for the 'rescue' of South Africa's Antarctic Research programme: 'The end of the Cold War has altered the geopolitical landscape. There is mounting pressure on exploiting the living resources of the Southern Ocean. Tourism is growing. The threat or promise of prospecting for minerals is ever present. Scientists too are making increasing demands to

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<sup>4</sup> Steven Chown quoted by John Yeld, "New Marion Island Base opens," *Cape Argus* (18 March 2011).

<sup>5</sup> For example the Convention for the Conservation of Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) that was related to the Antarctic Treaty System (see chapter five), as well as the International Whaling Commission (IWC), International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT), International Dumping Convention, International Air Transport Association (IATA).

understand and take greater advantage than ever before of this unique laboratory.’<sup>6</sup> Although, as this dissertation has also underlined, the word of scientists should not be taken at face value, the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic are certainly bound to become more important still. Concomitantly, so will the need to understand the historical trajectory of South Africa’s relationship with it. The sub-Antarctic and Antarctic should not be left out in the cold.

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<sup>6</sup> Editorial, “Antarctic research programme also in need of rescue,” *South African Journal of Science* 98 (May 2002), 210.

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