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GEOGRAPHIC MEMORANDUM

CONTINUED EXPANSION OF  
SOVIET ANTARCTIC ACTIVITIES

CIA/RR G/E 59-9

November 1959

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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I. Introduction

Recent announcements indicate that Soviet Antarctic activities are not only being expanded to a noteworthy extent during the 1959-60 season but are also being broadened in scope to include a number of Bloc countries. Evidence indicates that these plans are within Soviet capabilities and that some have significant international implications.

II. Announced Plans

According to a Home Service Broadcast on the plans for the Fifth Expedition, the Ob, flagship and four-season veteran of Soviet Antarctic operations, will sail for Lazaryev and Mirnyy early in November 1959. It is to be followed by a passenger-cargo vessel, the Kooperatsiya, which will deliver about 160 people together with supplies, equipment, and 4 new aircraft -- an IL-14, an LI-2, an AN-2, and an MI-4 helicopter. Another report states that the Ob will also carry Russian soil for electrically heated hotbeds at Mirnyy, in order to raise vegetables for the staff stationed there. The ships are scheduled to reach the Antarctic by the end of December 1959 or early January 1960, and "Among the members of the Fifth Expedition will be scientists from the German Peoples Republic, Czechoslovakia, and possibly the Chinese Peoples Republic."

The announced activities of the Fifth Expedition include the establishment of three new summer stations to supplement and support the

work already in progress at the year-round stations at Mirnyy, Lazaryev, and Vostok. As previously announced, a trans-Antarctic glaciological traverse from Vostok to Lazaryev via the US-operated South Pole Station and the Soviet station at the Pole of Inaccessibility will be attempted. According to 1959-60 plans, the Lazaryev station -- which will eventually have a staff of 25 -- will serve as a base for collecting data on eastern Antarctica for the compilation of "the first geological map of the mountains of Queen Maud Land." A further report from Moscow, dated 4 November 1959, states that the Fifth Expedition will use the so-called "jumping" air groups (which have already been tested by high-latitude air expeditions in the central Arctic Basin) to land small field parties with portable equipment at various points in the largely unexplored eastern Antarctic. One objective of these groups will be "to obtain materials for compiling a hypsometric map of the East Antarctic." For the first time, an extensive aeromagnetic survey of the eastern Antarctic is planned which, combined with seismic research and gravimetric observations, will contribute to a better understanding of the principal forms of relief concealed beneath the continental ice. Mobile scientific stations are planned for both the coast and inland.

After completing its mission of supplying the Lazaryev and Mirnyy stations and equipping the trans-Antarctic expedition, the Ob will proceed to the Bellingshausen Sea area, where geologic studies will be undertaken.

Other indications of expanding activities include an announcement by the Chairman of the Interdepartmental Commission for the Study of

Antarctica that "Soviet aircraft will soon make nonstop flights from Moscow to Mirnyy." The construction of new whaling ships indicates that 3 new whaling fleets are to be put in operation, ultimately making a total of 4 Soviet fleets operating in Antarctic waters. In a TASS broadcast of 13 September 1959, Treshnikov, head of the 1956-57 Antarctic expedition, stated that the atomic icebreaker Lenin would be used not only in the Arctic but also in the Antarctic.

The Praesidium of the Academy of Sciences has recently approved the "general direction of work on the study of the Antarctic for 1959-1965," indicating long-range planning for continued Soviet activities in Antarctica.

### III. Progress and Implications of Planned Activities

The summer station at Komsomol'skaya is currently being reactivated to function as a supply and fuel base for the trans-Antarctic traverse; and, if conditions permit continuance of the traverse to Lazaryev late in the Antarctic autumn of 1960, the temporary station at the Pole of Inaccessibility will probably be reactivated for the same purpose. Of the new stations to be set up, the 2 that will be aids in the trans-Antarctic traverse have been located roughly; one will be south of Lazaryev and the other near the Australian Mawson Station. The third may be the Bellingshausen Station in the unclaimed sector, the establishment of which was announced as an objective in 1958.

The Soviets probably feel confident that the Bellingshausen Station can be set up, if necessary with the aid of AN-2 (Colt) biplanes, whose ability to operate from unprepared surfaces was proved during the extensive

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Antarctic operations of both the Ob (1957-58) and the Lena (1956-57); and by the results of ice reconnaissance undertaken by the Ob in the vicinity of the Amundsen and Bellingshausen Seas in April 1958 and by the 26-vessel Slava whaling fleet in early 1959. The latter came within a mile or two of Peter I Island, or about 250 nautical miles of the intended site -- a distance well within the capability of the AN-2 with its 945-nautical-mile range and its 1,650-pound cargo capacity.

If the Soviets attain this goal before the penetration planned by the US for early 1960 is completed, Soviet propaganda is likely to exploit the fact that the USSR was able to reach the most inaccessible part of Antarctica, an area that had defied even the most powerful icebreakers of the US. Moreover, the establishment and maintenance of a station in the Bellingshausen Sea area could ultimately challenge the primacy of US rights in an unclaimed area, and have a worrisome effect on Chile and Argentina because of the proximity of such a station to the Security Zone of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance.

The inclusion of several Bloc scientists in the Soviet program of Antarctic research suggests that other Bloc countries, in addition to Poland, may eventually acquire bases in Antarctica. This, in turn, would broaden Bloc participation in the international administrative machinery that may emerge as a result of the Antarctic treaty, negotiations for which began on 15 October 1959, in Washington, D.C. This year will be the second season for Czech participation in the Soviet Antarctic program. The inclusion of East Germany for the first time may be an attempt to seize, for the Bloc, initiative in exploiting German interests

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that had been built up by prewar German Antarctic activities, since the Federal Republic excluded Antarctica from its IGY and subsequent programs. East German and CHICOM participation was ostensibly sought on their own initiative and could be a maneuver to test the sincerity of the anticipated US-initiated treaty to assure freedom of Antarctic research to all countries. The Soviets are also transporting 18 Poles to the former Soviet station Oazis, which has been renamed Dobrowolski by the Poles. Eleven of the Poles will remain in the Antarctic for the winter.

Preparations for the trans-Antarctic glaciological traverse are already underway. The first preparatory tractor train, consisting of 5 tracked vehicles with equipment, supplies, and a scientific staff of 16 men, departed from Mirnyy on 27 September and arrived on 19 October at Komsomol'skaya, where 3 specially built, self-contained tracked vehicles, 6 sleighs, and 125 tons of freight were delivered in February 1959. At Komsomol'skaya the main party for the traverse will be formed. Early in October the Soviets began flights (using an LI-2 airplane) from Mirnyy to Lazaryev -- a distance of more than 1,650 miles -- in preparation for the air support of the 1959-60 scientific program.

Nonstop flight from the USSR to Antarctica has been a goal of the Soviets for several years. Such flights were planned as early as 1955; but the subsequently procured transit rights via the Cocos Islands and Perth, which were obtained from Australia by negotiation, were never exercised. In 1956, a Soviet scientist again mentioned that nonstop flights to the Antarctic were being planned. A recent report, attributed

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to Treshnikov, states that a TU-114 may soon be used. Whether the Antarctic landing facilities can be made adequate for aircraft large enough for nonstop flights is as yet uncertain. Soviet motives for so grandiose an undertaking, involving more than 9,000 nautical miles of flight (7,600 nautical miles by the great-circle route) undoubtedly stem from the desire for a spectacular demonstration of Soviet air capability and for greater operational advantages, including increased flow of key scientific personnel, scientific instruments, and perishable foods.

Factory ships are under construction for three new whaling fleets, but it is not known as yet whether they will all have scientific research vessels similar to the one attached to the Slava fleet. The 44,000-ton factory ship Sovetskaya Ukraina will begin operations during the 1959-60 season, and construction has begun on the Sovetskaya Rossiya, a sister ship. The third, the 40,000-ton factory ship Yuriy Dolgorukiy, is being built in the Soviet Zone of Germany. The Sovetskaya Rossiya will operate out of Vladivostok and the other two from Kaliningrad; the veteran Slava whaling fleet will continue its activities out of Odessa. Upwards of 60 Soviet whalers, plus support vessels, can ultimately be expected in Antarctic waters. Whalers in such large numbers may eventually lead not only to a Soviet domination of the industry but also to a breakdown in international controls for the conservation of whaling stocks.

The use of the atomic icebreaker is not expected during the 1959-60 season. The Lenin, now undergoing a test cruise, has as its priority mission the serving of research and shipping requirements in the Arctic

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Basin. It is believed that the Soviets will limit its operation during the first year to extensive testing and training in the areas nearer home rather than extend the venture into the more distant waters of the Antarctic. Ultimately, however, use of the Lenin can be expected to lengthen the operational period and expand services in the Antarctic as well as the Arctic. Moreover, it will extend the range of choice to many suitable station sites that otherwise might be inaccessible.



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