

Argentine and Chilean Claims to British Antarctica. - Bases established in the South Shetlands. - Chilean President inaugurates Chilean Army Bases on Greenwich Island. - Argentine Naval Demonstration in British Antarctic Waters. - H.M.S. "Nigeria" despatched to Falklands. - British Government Statements. - Argentine-Chilean Agreement on Joint Defence of "Antarctic Rights." - The Byrd and Ronne Antarctic Expeditions. - Australian Antarctic Expedition occupies Heard Islands.

The Foreign-Office in London, in statements on Feb. 7 and Feb. 13, announced that Argentina and Chile had rejected British protests, earlier presented in Buenos Aires and Santiago, against the action of those countries in establishing bases in British Antarctic territories.

The announcement of Feb. 7 stated that on Dec. 7, 1947, the British Ambassador in Buenos Aires, Sir Reginald Leeper, had presented a Note expressing British "anxiety" at the activities in the Antarctic of an Argentine naval expedition which had visited part of the Falkland Islands Dependencies, including Graham Land, the South Shetlands, and the South Orkneys, and had landed at various points in British territory; that a request had been made for Argentine nationals to evacuate bases established on Deception Island and Gamma Island, in the South Shetlands; that H.M. Government had proposed that the Argentine should submit her claim to Antarctic sovereignty to the International Court of Justice for adjudication; and that on Dec. 23, 1947, a second British Note had been presented expressing surprise at continued violations of British territory and territorial waters by Argentine vessels in the Antarctic. On Jan. 28, 1948, the Argentine Government had replied to the effect that both the Falkland Islands and the Falkland Dependencies were considered Argentine national territory by right, no formal declaration of annexation being considered necessary; had rejected the British request for the evacuation of Deception and Gamma Islands; and had likewise rejected the proposal to refer the matter to the International Court, suggesting instead that the political status of the territories concerned should be discussed at an international conference in Buenos Aires by Argentine, Chilean, and British representatives.

The announcement of Feb. 13 stated that H.M. Ambassador in Santiago, Sir John Leche, had similarly protested to the Chilean Government on Dec. 17, 1947, against acts of trespass in the Falkland Dependencies during the summer of 1947; and in particular against the action of the Chilean Navy in setting up permanent post on Greenwich Island (South Shetlands), proposing, as in the Note to Argentina, that the matter be referred to the International Court. The Chilean reply, of Jan. 31, contended that Chile legitimately exercised sovereignty over the area concerned,

referring to a proclamation issued by the Chilean Government as far back as December 1939 (see 4649 A), and declined to refer the dispute to the International Court.

Both the Argentine and Chilean replies referred to an Argentine Chilean agreement of July 1947 wherein both countries expressed their conviction of the "indisputable rights" of Chile and Argentina over the "South American Antarctic." The disputed areas—the Falkland Dependencies, including Graham Land, South Georgia, and the South Shetland, South Orkney, and South Sandwich islands—had been administered by Britain for over 50 years, the area having been discovered by British explorers in 1819–22. The Dependencies were declared British possessions by Letters Patent of 1908 and 1917, and South Georgia has had a resident magistrate since 1909, seasonal visit to the other islands also being made by British magistrates. Both Argentina and Chile, and especially the former country, had, however, claimed the Falklands and the Dependencies for a number of years, several diplomatic exchanges with Great Britain having occurred on this matter from time to time (see 8042 B).

On Feb. 9 it was announced in Santiago that the Chilean President, Dr. Gonzalez Videla, accompanied by Chilean Army officers and representatives of the Chilean Congress, was *en route* for the "Chilean Antarctic," on board the transport *Presidente Pinto*, to inaugurate two Chilean Army bases on Greenwich Island. These bases, manned by Chilean ski troops, were formally inaugurated on Feb. 16 and Feb. 17. President Gonzalez, who hoisted the Chilean flag at the bases and also inaugurated meteorological stations, declared that Chile, as the legitimate successor of the Spanish Crown in the South American Antarctic, exercised "indisputable rights of sovereignty" over those regions, adding that Chile would "know how to maintain the sovereignty of her territory from Africa to the South Pole." In an obvious reference to the despatch of the British cruiser *Nigeria* to the Falklands (see below), he spoke of "vicious and obsolete imperialisms" which "threatened by armed violence to displace Chile and Argentina from their territories," declared that such "aggression" was directed against all the American countries, and added that the Americas were "not to day disarmed and disunited, nor open to aggression by any extra-Continental Power." At the same time a Chilean proclamation was issued renaming Graham Land as Tierra de O'Higgins (O'Higgins Land, after the Chilean patriot Bernardo O'Higgins). President Gonzalez, on his arrival at Punta Arenas on Feb. 24 from this expedition, publicly announced that Chile had annexed the "Chilean Antarctic," that it would be incorporated in Magellan Province (the southernmost province of Chile, comprising the western part of Tierra del Fuego and including Cape Horn), and that it would have its administrative capital on Navarino Island, off Tierra del Fuego. On March 3, addressing a large crowd in Santiago, the President again accused Britain of "aggression" in sending the *Nigeria* to the Antarctic, described Britain's action as "a threat against all the nations of the Americans," appealed for the support of all American nations, and said that Chile would raise the question at the forthcoming Pan-American Conference in Bogotá.

An Argentine naval squadron under the command of Vice-Admiral Juan Carranza, consisting of the 6,800-ton cruisers *Almirante Brown* and *Veinticinco de Mayo* and the destroyers *Entre Ríos*, *San Luis*, *Misiones*, *Santa Cruz*, *Mendoza*, and *Cervantes*, left Ushuaia, in Eastern (Argentine) Tierra del Fuego, on Feb. 18 for manoeuvres in British Antarctic waters. The squadron arrived on Feb. 22 off Deception Island, met the Chilean transport *Presidente Pinto* bearing President

Gonzalez back to Punta Arenas, and subsequently returned to its base at Puerto Belgrano, where it arrived on Feb. 20.

The British Admiralty announced on Feb. 15 that the 8,000-ton cruiser *Nigeria* had sailed from Simonstown (South Africa) for the Falklands. On Feb. 26 the *Nigeria* arrived at Port Stanley, capital of the Falklands, without encountering the Argentine squadron, which had earlier set sail for its home base. Answering a question in the House of Commons on Feb. 16, the Minister of State, Mr. Hector McNeil, said that both Argentine and Chilean naval forces were operating in British Antarctic waters "with the declared object of enforcing claims to sovereignty in this area"; that those countries had landed parties and purported to set up military commands in British territory; that H.M. Government "consider the British title to the Falkland Dependencies to be well founded," and were "willing that it should stand the test of international arbitration"; and that the refusal of Argentina and Chile to refer the matter to the International Court was regarded by H.M. Government "as evidence that they have no confidence in their ability to-dispute our legal title."

Mr. Attlee, questioned in the House on Feb. 23 by Mr. Eden, gave an assurance that the British Government would not be "checked or chivied out of British territory anywhere in the world," and added that the *Nigeria*, after her arrival at Port Stanley, would visit the Falkland Dependencies In company with the sloop *Snipe* (which, prior to the *Nigeria*'s arrival, was the only British warship in Antarctic waters). Referring to an offer by Mr. Chflley, the Australian Premier, on Feb. 18 to send an Australian cruiser to the Falklands to reinforce Britain, he expressed appreciation of the Australian offer but stated that H.M. Government did not consider such action necessary. Mr. Bevin, in a statement on Feb. 25, said, with reference to Argentine and Chilean activities in the Antarctic, that in the British Government's opinion "these expeditions and the declarations accompanying them in no way affect the question or title or sovereignty in these areas" and were merely "gestures in support of claims not recognised by other nations," adding that H.M. Government had no intention of bringing the matter before the Security Council and believed that the rival claims should in the first instance be brought before the International Court. In a further statement on March 3, the Foreign Secretary said, with reference to the landing of Argentine and Chilean-detachments in the Falkland Dependencies, that "H.M. ships and magistrates in charge of British occupied posts have instructions to take all necessary measures to safeguard the British legal title to sovereignty in the Dependencies."

An Argentine-Chilean pact reaffirming the determination of both countries to "defend their rights in the Antarctic" was signed in Santiago on March 4 by Senor Vergara, the Chilean Foreign Minister, and Dr. Pascual Larosa, special envoy of President Peron. At the same time the Argentine Foreign Minister, Dr. Bramuglia, in a press statement in Buenos Aires, declared that Argentina and Chile would take a common bland on the Antarctic issue at the Pan-American Conference in Bogotá.

Mr. Marshall, the U.S. Secretary of State, at a press interview in Washington on Feb. 18, said that the U.S. Government considered the Antarctic dispute primarily a matter for Chile, Argentina, and Great Britain, and declined to discuss the question of whether or not the Monroe Doctrine was involved. With reference to the decisions of the Petropolis Conference in August last, when the zone of Hemispheric defence was delimited so as to include the Falkland and the

Falkland Dependencies (see map, page 8881), Mr. Marshall pointed out that the U.S. delegation, in accepting this zone, had not thereby pledged Itself to "underwrite" Argentine and Chilean territorial claims.

The Chilean Foreign Office, in a statement on Dec. 14, 1946, defined Chilean Antarctica, in terms of the Presidential proclamation of 1939, as comprising "all land, islands, roofs, and pack-ice, discovered and undiscovered." lying between meridians 53 and 90 West longitude (thus overlapping by 27 degrees the British Antarctic territories, which lie between meridians 20 and 80 West), adding that preparations were under way for the despatch of two Chilean naval vessels, the frigate *Iquitos* and the transport *Angamos*, to Antarctica "to establish contact with that most remote corner of the national territory and to determine on the spot the possibilities it offers." The Chilean expedition sailed from Valparaiso on Jan. 15, 1947, and in March inaugurated a permanent base on Greenwich island which was named Puerto Soberania (Port Sovereignty). It was at this base that President Gonzalez inaugurated one the two Army bases in February 1948, the other being about 60 miles distant.

The Chilean Foreign Minister (then Don Raul Juliet), addressing the Chilean Senate on Jan. 21, 1947, attempted to uphold Chile's Antarctic claims by reference to the period of Spanish domination prior to the attainment of their independence by the Latin American countries. Citing historical works of the period, he affirmed that since 1555 all successive Governors of Chile considered their jurisdiction to extend southward from the Magellan Straits to the South Pole; quoted documents issued by the Emperor Charles V to the *conquistadores* to show that that monarch considered his sovereignty to extend over "all the lands on the other side of the Magellan Straits," and contended that Chile when she attained her independence of Spain, was the natural inheritor of the frontiers of the Mother Country and automatically came into possession of territory "comprising the natural prolongation of her lands in the direction of the South Pole."

The Argentine Government, on Oct. 9, 1946, issued a decree claiming sovereignty over the "continental shelf," and the waters above it, adjacent to the Argentine mainland, embracing a large part of British Antarctica and also considerably overlapping with the Chilean claims (see accompanying map). On Jan. 5, 1947, the naval transport *Patagonia* sailed from Buenos, Aires for the Antarctic with a scientific and meteorological expedition, it being announced on March 31 that a radio station and meteorological posts had been established on Gamma Island, in the South Shetlands. Later in the year a small naval garrison was established at Puerto Melchior, on Deception Island.

In January and February, 1947, the American Antarctic Expedition headed by the veteran polar explorer, Rear-Admiral Richard E. Byrd (see 8267 D), carried out extensive aerial investigations over wide areas of Antarctica, making many interesting discoveries of the highest geographical and geological importance and delimiting large areas of the Antarctic Continent which were hitherto unknown or mutters of conjecture.

The expedition, the largest and best-equipped of its kind ever to proceed to Antarctica, set sail from Norfolk (Virginia) and San Diego (California) on Dec. 2, 1946. It comprised 13 naval vessels (including the transport *Mount Olympus*, Rear-Admiral Byrd's flagship, the seaplane

tender *Pine Island*, the coastguard cutter *North Wind*, the destroyer *Brownson*, and an ice-breaker) and about 4,000 men, including scientists, cartographers, radio experts, and press correspondents, the whole under the operational command of Rear-Admiral Richard H. Cruzen. The expedition was equipped with long-range seaplanes, with the latest do-icing and photographic equipment, for carrying out extensive flights over the Antarctic Continent and mapping the coasts and interior.

On arrival in Antarctic waters the expedition divided into three sections, (1) a Central Group, headed by Rear-Admiral Byrd, which established itself on the Ross Ice Shelf after penetrating by ice-breaker through the Ross Sea, (2) an Eastern Group which worked round the Antarctic coast north of the Ross Sea along Marie Byrd Land, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Sea, James Ellsworth Land, and Peter I Island, as far as the Palmer Peninsula and Graham Land; and (3) a Western Group which worked round the coast southwards from the Ross Sea, along the Oates Coast, King George V Land, Wilkes Land, the Knox Coast, the Queen Mary Coast, the Prince Olav Coast, the Ragnhild Coast, to Queen Maud Land.

The Central Group, after entering the Bay of Whales, set up "tent town" base on the Ross Ice Shelf as the expedition's head-quarter, an air-strip being laid down on the ice by "Seabees." The base, Little America (near the site of the base of the same name established by the Byrd Expedition of 1939-41), was set up on Jan. 13, 1947, while at the same time the Eastern and Western Groups commenced their circumnavigating expeditions on both sides of the Antarctic Continent.

Planes of all 3 groups carried out extensive long-range flights in all directions, took numerous aerial photographs, and made discoveries of the greatest interest. On Feb. 7 Rear-Admiral Byrd announced from the Little America base that discoveries had been made which would necessitate radical alterations of all existing maps of Antarctica, including great mountain-peaks, 15,000ft. high, in the hitherto unknown territory between Marie Byrd Land and James Ellsworth Land, new islands and peninsulas, and large bays, one of which, on the Oates Coast, was 4 times the size of Connecticut and bordered by, 8,000ft, mountains. One of the most remarkable discoveries ever made in Antarctica took place on Feb. 10, when planes of the Western Group, flying over the Knox Coast discovered an inland "oasis," 500ft. above sea level, of lakes and mounds which was completely devoid of ice and stretched for about 40 miles, Capt. Charles Bond, commanding the Western Group, described these lakes as "of a pea-green, muddy colour, interspersed with dark blue and light green," and the mounds as being of a dark brown colour and rising about 500 ft.; a seaplane landing on one of the lakes reported that the water was appreciably warmer than elsewhere in the Antarctic and that the rocks of this region looked as though they might contain ores. Between the lakes the ground was of a varied red or green colour which to some members of the expedition suggested the possibility of plant life and to others thermal springs, though this could not be known without closer investigation. No expansion was forthcoming of the existence of this "lake oasis" in the Antarctic Continent, but scientist attached to the expedition said that the discovery was of the greatest significance from both geographical and geological standpoints, and that the area might be warm enough to support year-round human settlements.

On Feb. 15 Rear-Admiral Byrd, flying within 170 miles of the Pole, discovered a previously unknown range of reddish-coloured mountains (presumably of volcanic origin) higher than the

Matter horn, and on the following day flew over the South Pole and beyond to photograph 75,000 square miles of territory never before seen by man, and also containing great mountains. While flying over the South Pole, Rear-Admiral Byrd (the only man to have flown over both North and South Poles) dropped a carton containing the flags of all the United Nations.

Owing to the freezing of the pack-ice, the Little America base was abandoned on Feb. 25, when Rear-Admiral Byrd and his party left Antarctica for New Zealand en route for the U.S.A. The Eastern and Western Groups also returned to the U.S.A. at the beginning of March. Rear-Admiral Byrd arrived back in Washington on April 14, and on April 16, at a press conference, said that the expedition had explored a total of 1,700,000 sq. miles of the Antarctic Continent, of which 900,000 sq. miles was hitherto unknown; had charted 5,400 miles of coastline (1,400 miles new and 3,000 miles previously mapped erroneously); had taken over, 70,000 aerial photographs; had discovered 22 new mountain ranges, 2 of them with peaks over 20,000 ft, high, and 26 new islands, and that, apart from a 500 mile stretch of coast, the expedition had circumnavigated a continent as big as the U.S.A., Europe, and Mexico combined. He strongly refuted reports—which had been current in the U.S. press—that one of the objects of the expedition had been to locate possible uranium deposits, saying that no traces of this mineral had been discovered; denied also that the expedition had had any political or annexationist aims; and gave it as his opinion that Antarctica could be used for the benefit of humanity as a gigantic "icebox" where great quantities of food could be stored in years of bumper crops and kept in cold storage against times of famine and food shortage; in this connection he said that he had eaten meat and butter left in the snow 14 years ago and still perfectly preserved.

While in Antarctica, members of the Byrd Expedition found, on Feb. 20, a copper tube on the Ross Ice Shelf, corroded from 30 years exposure, which, when opened, was found to contain a scroll in the writing of Sir Ernest Shackleton, the famous British explorer, paying tribute to 3 members of the Shackleton Expedition of 1914–17. The tube was found in the snow near the site of the camp used by Captain Scott in 1910–12, and 8 miles from the site of the Shackleton camp, and contained a quotation from Browning's poem *Prospero* and the following message: "Sacred to the memory of Lieut. Aeneas Mackintosh, R.N.R., V. G. Hayward, and the Rev. A. P. Spencer-Smith, who perished in the service of the expedition." (Mackintosh, Hayward, and Spencer-Smith, members of the Shackleton South Pole Expedition, intended to cross the Antarctic Continent from the Weddell Sea to the Ross Sea, Mackintosh being the leader of the party; they sledged 950 miles in 162 days, but scurvy, privation, and the effect of recurrent blizzards led to their death). On arrival back in Washington the tube and its contents were handed by Rear-Admiral Cruzen to the British Naval Attaché for transmission to the British Admiralty.

Another U.S. expedition to Antarctica was undertaken in 1947 by Commander Finn Ronne, formerly Rear-Admiral Byrd's second-in-command. The Ronne Expedition, though carried out as a private enterprise, was supported by the U.S. Government as well as by American scientific institutions, including the American Geographical Society.

The Ronne Expedition, which included physicists, geologists, mineralogists, and meteorologists and, like the Byrd Expedition, was equipped with seaplanes left Beaumont (Texas) on Jan. 25, 1947, and on arrival in the Antarctic set up its base on Stonington Island, in the South Shetlands,

with the permission of the British authorities. The expedition, which co-operated with British scientific posts in the Falkland Dependencies, concentrated on explorations in that part of the Antarctic Continent surrounding the Weddell Sea, i.e., in that sector of Antarctica not covered by the Eastern and Western Groups of the Byrd Expedition. In a statement from his Stonington Island base on Dec. 14, 1947, after the expedition's work had been completed, Cmdr. Ronne announced that the last completely unknown Antarctic region, from Mount Tricorn to the Filchner Ice Shelf had been mapped from the air; that 230,000 sq. miles of new and hitherto unknown land had been explored by air in what was formerly the most difficult and inaccessible sector of Antarctica; that it had been conclusively proved that Antarctica was a single continent and not, as had been thought possible, divided by a frozen body of water between the Weddell and Ross Seas; that over 4,500 aerial photographs had been taken; and that many new natural features had been discovered, e.g., a 250-mile stretch of new coastline which he had named the Isaiah Bowman Coast (in honour of the President of Johns Hopkins University) and a 85-mile deep bay which had been named American Geographical Society Bay.

On Nov. 14, 1947, the first vessel of the Australian Antarctic Research Expedition, sponsored by the Commonwealth Government, sailed from Melbourne to establish a scientific and meteorological base on Heard Island, a remote island in the Southern Ocean about 2,500 miles S.W. of Fremantle and over 2,000 miles S.E. of Cape Town. Mr. Chifley, the Commonwealth Premier, announced before the departure of the vessel (a tank-landing craft of the Royal Australian Navy, LST-3501) from Melbourne that Heard Island would constitute a base from which further explorations would be carried out in the Australian Antarctic, and that important researches into cosmic rays, weather conditions, etc., would be carried out from that centre. The LST-3501 arrived at Heard Island on Dec. 26, the Australian flag being hoisted by Group-Capt. Stuart Campbell, leader of the Expedition. On Feb. 7, 1948, the exploration ship *Wyatt Earp*, equipped with the most modern scientific devices, left Hobart for the Australian Antarctic; it was announced that she would eventually establish a permanent base on the Antarctic Continent and that, until such a base was established, she would operate from Heard Island and the French island of Kergueien, the French authorities having given permission for the use of the latter island.—(New York Times - New York Herald Tribune - Christian Science Monitor, Boston - Times - Daily Telegraph - Manchester Guardian - South American Journal - Chilean Embassy, London - Australian News Bureau) (**Prev. rep. Antarctica, 4639 A; Falklands, Argentine-Chilean Claims, 8042 B; Byrd Expedition, 8267 D; Prince Edward Is., S.A. Annex., 9069 A.**)