

# The reluctant hosts: Soviet Antarctic expedition ships visit Australia and New Zealand in 1956

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**ABSTRACT.** Russian and Australian primary sources were examined in an attempt to reconstruct the voyage of the first composite Soviet Antarctic expedition to Antarctica and from thence to Leningrad [St Petersburg]. This expedition had the aim of constructing a base for the Soviet International Geophysical Year (IGY) commitment. In a time of cold war tension and unresolved Antarctic claims, the Australian and New Zealand governments were wary of Soviet intentions and barely tolerated visits by Soviet expeditions. However, in their interactions with Australians and New Zealanders, the Soviets were careful to underline the friendly nature of their visits and avoided any sensitive political questions. The two governments' apparent lack of enthusiasm for *Ob* and *Lena* entering their ports after fulfilling their task in Antarctica is contrasted with the generally more enthusiastic attitude of the Australian and New Zealand scientists and expedition members, with whom the Soviet personnel came into contact, some of whom developed lasting scientific relationships with the visitors.

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## Introduction

The events leading up to the Soviet decision to participate in the International Geophysical Year of 1957–1958 and to establish a formidable presence in Antarctica were discussed in a paper presented to the second workshop of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research action group on the history of Antarctic research held in Santiago, Chile, on 21–22 September 2006 (Gan in press). The purpose of the present paper is to follow the ships of the first composite Soviet Antarctic expedition of 1955–1957 on their voyage from the USSR to the Antarctic continent and on their return journey via Macquarie Island, New Zealand and Australia in order to highlight the contacts that the Soviet expedition staff encountered during their visits to those places. These contacts occurred at the beginning of intensive Soviet activity in Antarctica in a period of cold war tension and unresolved Antarctic territorial claims and were the forerunners of future efforts to lay the foundation for an international regime for the South Polar region in which the USSR was a major participant.

At the time, the Anglo–American world, which obviously included Australia and New Zealand, was gripped by suspicion and fear of the Soviet communist

menace and adhered to a policy of containing perceived Soviet expansionism. Attempts by the Soviet Union to forge cordial international relations were seen as having a sinister purpose, in the words of the Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies 'to make more swift and certain the defeat of the democracies' (quoted in Meaney 1985: 600). While the Soviet scientists appeared serious in their overtures to create cordial relations in keeping with the non–political scientific purposes of the IGY, fear of possible ulterior motives and of their intention to establish bases in the sector of the Antarctic continent claimed by Australia led to a reluctance on the part of the Australian government to develop closer links with the Soviet expedition. This paper devotes particular attention to the unenthusiastic attitude of the Australian and New Zealand governments to visits by the Soviet ships to their ports. The attitude of both governments was strikingly similar for several obvious reasons. They were close neighbours, with a common British heritage, and were both members of the Commonwealth, they were both claimants to Antarctic territory, they shared similar strategic interests and were fellow signatories together with the United States, of the Australia, New Zealand and United States (ANZUS) treaty, and they shared the same cold war concerns about the Soviet threat. The paper notes that the two governments demonstrated some contrasts in their attitudes. Comment is also made on the attitudes of their scientific communities to the Soviet expedition and emphasises the interest in its work shown by Australia's most eminent Antarctic scientist and explorer, Sir Douglas Mawson.

Information for the paper was obtained from the diaries and monographs published in Russian by the prolific scientific secretary of the marine component of the expedition (E. Suzyumov, 1908–1998), its leader (Professor V. Kort, 1913–1994) and the captain of the flagship and main oceanographic research vessel *Ob* (I. Man, 1903–1982). These papers are found in an anthology



Fig. 1. The head of the Soviet Antarctic expedition M. Somov (left) and captain of *Ob*, I. Man (right) (photo by A. Less from the Archives of Cino and Photo Documents, Krasnogorsk, Russia).

edited by I. Bardin entitled *Opisanie ekspeditsii na d/e 'Ob' 1955–1956* [An account of the expedition on the diesel/electric ship 'Ob' 1955–1956] (Bardin 1958) and in Suzyumov's book *K shestomu materiku* [To the sixth continent] (Suzyumov 1958a). Russian language archival material comes largely from the Glavsevmorput [Northern Sea Directorate] section in the State Economic Archives in Moscow and from expedition reports in the Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute in St Petersburg. The Australian perspective on the expedition was gleaned from the correspondence files in the National Archives of Australia (NAA) in Canberra; the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) Library special collection in Kingston, Tasmania, and the South Australian Museum Mawson Antarctic Collection in Adelaide, South Australia. The correspondence files also contain communications between the Australian and New Zealand High Commissions that shed light on New Zealand attitudes.

### The first composite Soviet Antarctic expedition

The first Soviet composite Antarctic expedition was established by a decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR on 13 July 1955 and comprised a continental and a marine component. It was headed by the deputy director of the USSR Arctic Research Institute, M. Somov (1908–1973) who was also leader of the continental component (Fig. 1). The leader of the marine component and second in command of the whole expedition was Professor V. Kort. The expedition was assigned three vessels: the icebreaker sister ships *Ob*, captained by I. Man, *Lena*, captained by A. Vetrov (Fig. 2), and a refrigerated support vessel *Refrigerator 7*, whose master was M. Tsigankov.

The flagship and main oceanographic research vessel was *Ob*, which on 20 August 1955 entered the Riga, Latvia, plant of the naval ministry of the USSR, headed by G. Zadorozhniy, to spend three months undergoing a major refit as an oceanographic research vessel. This included the installation of navigation and communication



Fig. 2. Captain of the *Lena* A. Vetrov (photo by A. Less from the Archives of Cino and Photo Documents, Krasnogorsk, Russia).

systems, and winches, and the construction of passenger cabins and laboratories (Kort 1958a: 9). According to a decree of the chief of Glavsevmorput, V. Burhanov (1908–1982), issued on 11 November 1955, the expedition was to load at Kaliningrad and to depart from that port on 30 November 1955 (Burhanov 1955).

However, due to the scope of the proposed work, three months was insufficient for it to be completed, and construction continued *en route* to the Antarctic (Glavsevmorput 1956: 146). *Ob* arrived in Kaliningrad from Riga on 22 November, five days later than was planned (Burhanov 1955), consequently reducing the time for loading from fourteen days to nine. Space on both the vessels was at a premium: 'each place on the *Ob* and *Lena* was worth its weight in gold - all the cabins were filled to the brim: there were about three times too many people on board', recalled V. Hodirev, the fourth officer/electric radio navigator on *Lena* and future mayor of Leningrad (Strugatskiy 2006a). Besides the crew, *Ob* carried the main contingent of the marine expedition, some personnel of the continental expedition and the building brigade as well as journalists and filmmakers who were to report on the expedition. Most of the participants were Communist Party members, but some were entrusted with the task of ensuring that all voyagers adhered to party discipline at all times. There was at least one of these highly influential political officers on each vessel.

A crowded pre-departure meeting was held on the wharf at Kaliningrad, at which Burhanov delivered a farewell address (Fig. 3). The departure was extensively covered in the media with magazine and newspaper articles and newsreels which were shown in cinemas; a short 1955 documentary film by G. Zakharova and A. Istomin *The Soviet Antarctic expedition departs for Antarctica* (RGAKFD 1955) briefly outlining the Soviet plans and preparations for departure was widely distributed. According to the captain, *Ob* finally departed at 18.00 hours on 1 December 1955 (Man 1958: 17), although a departure date of 30 November has been repeated many times in both Russian and English language expedition literature (Suzyumov 1958a: 5; Nudelman 1959: 8).



Fig. 3. Pre-departure meeting dedicated to the first Soviet Antarctic expedition (photo by V. Mastnokov and A. Less from the Archives of Cino and Photo Documents, Krasnogorsk, Russia).

After *Ob*'s departure, intensive preparations for *Lena*'s voyage south commenced under the direction of the deputy chief of Glavsevmorput, E. Tolstikov (1913–1987) (who later headed the third Soviet Antarctic expedition in 1957–1959) and were completed by Burhanov (Korotkevich 1956: 2). *Lena* was intended to conduct some of the scientific observations (Somov 1959: 11) and to carry out subsidiary research work. Her cargo and personnel started arriving in Kaliningrad while she was still in Riga at which port she arrived on the 7 December (Korotkevich 1956: 2) instead of 1 December, as was planned (Burhanov 1955). 'There was a lot of cargo, more than expected, and we had to leave behind some timber, fuel containers, tractor sledges, and diesel fuel ordered in Rotterdam', wrote the geographer E. Korotkevich (Korotkevich 1956: 2). *Lena* left port on 14 December fully loaded with 4250 tons of cargo and its contingent of crew, members of the continental and marine expeditions and part of the building brigade (Denisov and Bregman 1959: 437). The refrigerator support vessel *Refrigerator 7* sailed from Riga the next day loaded with 313 tons of perishables.

*Ob* arrived in Cape Town on 24 December 1955, where she was boarded by members of the Soviet consulate who were accompanied by the Czechoslovak consul, J. Patek, and greeted by masses of Christmas Eve revellers who came to the pier to see the Soviet icebreaker. The revellers wanted to talk and ask questions, although they were not allowed on board due to loading operations and time constraints. Contrasting with the revellers were what the expedition's scientific secretary, Suzyumov, took to be two policemen in khaki parading up and down the wharf in this 'reactionary capitalist country'. The Soviets were particularly anxious to display their dislike of the concept of apartheid and their solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the world. They pointedly invited the indigenous South African port workers to lunch in the ship's mess and allowed them full freedom to move about the ship, much to the annoyance of the 'parading policemen'. The final straw for them came when the ship's

loudspeakers began broadcasting the peace songs of the well-known African American singer, civil rights activist and very good friend of the Soviet Union, Paul Robeson. According to Suzyumov, one of them ran off to report this latest provocation to his superiors (Suzyumov 1958a: 61–62).

The only representative of an official scientific body to visit the ship was an officer from the South African meteorological service, A. Crawford, of Tristan da Cunha fame, who brought meteorological reference books as gifts to the Soviet expedition and shared his knowledge of the scientific bases and expeditions that were working in Antarctica at the time. He invited the Soviet meteorologists L. Sobolev and R. Usmanov to the meteorological observatory in Cape Town where the Russians offered to provide continuing meteorological data to the observatory. The local press, in a piece entitled 'Russians spring a surprise', later called this exchange a positive sign of scientific cooperation between the two countries (Suzyumov 1957: 57, 58; *Cape Argus* (Cape Town) 28 December 1955). In 1958 the South Africans presented *Ob* with a framed artistic photograph of Table Mountain in appreciation of this cooperation (Kort 1958b: 300). The stay in Cape Town was so short that the crew and expedition staff had insufficient time to rest before their departure for Antarctica (Somov 1959: 11).

The impression from all reports is that time was of the essence: summer was well advanced and *Ob* needed to reach its destination before winter conditions set in. So the ship proceeded at maximum speed and all four diesel electric engines were utilised to achieve an average speed of almost fourteen knots (Man 1958: 17). The ship arrived in Farr Bay (also known as Depot Bay) on 5 January 1956. After conducting air reconnaissance of the area to the west, it was decided to establish a base on an area of the Antarctic continent in Queen Mary Land near Haswell Islet. The coast between the West Ice Shelf and the Shackleton Ice Shelf (between King Leopold Astrid and Queen Astrid Coast and Knox Coast) was named the Pravda Coast after *Pravda* [Truth/Justice], the official newspaper of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Dubrovin and Preobrazhenskaya 1987: 127). This name has remained on Soviet maps of Antarctica, including one of the latest that was printed in 1980 (*Karta Antarktidi* 1980).

On 15 January 1956, *Ob* approached the future site of the main Soviet continental base Mirny and immediately commenced preparations for unloading, which continued round the clock in difficult weather conditions (Man 1958: 20; Glavsevmorput 1957). *Lena* approached Haswell Islet five days after *Ob* on 20 January and the construction of the base commenced on 22 January (Denisov and Bregman 1959: 438). The unloading of *Lena* proceeded slowly and Vetrov decided to move closer to the Pravda shore to unload cargo directly on to the 20 metre-high ice edge, rather than onto the fast ice (Suzyumov 1958a: 177). This was rather a risky manoeuvre due to the very real possibility of the edge collapsing, which did in fact



Fig. 4. Pilots of the first complex Antarctic Expedition in the Kaliningrad port. Second from left is Hero of the Soviet Union I. Cherevichniy (photo by A. Less from the Archives of Cino and Photo Documents, Krasnogorsk, Russia).

happen several times, notwithstanding the attempts at stabilisation by using explosives to precipitate the collapse of unstable sections. Hodirev later recalled Mawson's remark when they were in Adelaide that 'nobody had ever dared to unload in such a manner' (Strugatskiy 2006b). The danger inherent in such a situation led to the ice edge being named the Barrier *Otvazhniy*, [Barrier of the Courageous] emphasising the pioneering adventurous bravado of the expedition. *Ob* departed from Mirny on 28 February to continue its oceanographic observations, whilst *Lena*, which was being used as accommodation during the building of the base, was last to leave on 17 March after staying there almost two months. Delaying departure until well past the end of summer was a cause for some concern, since early February is the time during which the ice belt was expected to close. However, a reconnaissance flight towards the north of the Shackleton Ice Shelf assisted in finding a passage for *Lena* through the ice (Fig. 4). A party of 92 people was left to winter at the newly built base station with Somov as leader (Denisov and Bregman 1959: 441).

#### Possible visit of Soviet ships: Australian concerns

Meanwhile, on the Australian mainland, the Australian Broadcasting Commission received a message from Telegraphnoe Agentstvo Sovetskogo Soyuza [Telegraphic Agency of the Soviet Union], (TASS), on 29 February 1956 that *Ob* had left the Soviet expedition's base at Haswell Islet after spending one and a half months there and was 'at present sailing along the eastern shores of the Antarctic continent for the purpose of studying ocean currents and underwater mountain chains [and] might call at an Australian port during the next three months' (Kevin 1956b). The Australian Government had as yet received no official advice from the Soviets that *Ob* would call but 'had to take account of the possibility', wrote the assistant secretary of the Department of External Affairs (DEA) J.C.G. Kevin on the 9 March 1956 (Kevin 1956a) after hearing of the TASS report. He proceeded

to inform all interested government departments of the background concerning an exchange of notes between the Australian and USSR governments regarding the Soviet Antarctic expedition. The background to this was that on 29 August 1955, Australia had sent a note to the USSR in which it welcomed the interest of other countries in the IGY and offered to consider any facilities that it could provide to assist any expeditions seeking to increase scientific knowledge of the Antarctic. Australia would have preferred to keep the USSR out of Antarctica, but did not wish to risk international odium by appearing to go against the spirit of cooperation implicit in the IGY, hence the guarded 'welcome'. The note specified that the USSR, which did not recognise any claims for Antarctic territory, was proposing to carry out research in the Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT) which 'consists of the territory lying between the 45th and 136th meridians of east longitude and between the 142nd and the 160th meridians [east] south of sixtieth parallel of south latitude' (British Embassy, Moscow 1955). By spelling out its claim, Australia attempted to place the USSR in a position in which the latter was forced at least to acknowledge that a claim had been made, but the ruse was unsuccessful. In its reply, the USSR avoided all reference to the AAT. It simply thanked Australia for the offer and asked that facilities be provided in Australia for Soviet aircraft or ships involved in Antarctic research as mentioned in the note. Australia replied by asking for details concerning when it could expect the visits, but did not receive a reply. Kevin, however, set about preparing for an unannounced visit and advised other relevant government departments that it was quite possible that a Soviet ship would arrive without notice at an Australian port and assumed that each of the authorities concerned would apply its own appropriate procedures. One of these authorities, the marine branch of the Department of Shipping replied that it had advised its deputies in all states about the likelihood of *Ob* calling. The deputies had been instructed to give the ships every assistance within the limits of the Australian government's reply to the Soviet note and to be strictly correct towards the visitors 'without appearing officious and without giving the impression of trying to please them unduly' (Department of External Affairs 1956a) in keeping with the guarded, impartial tone of the reply.

Kevin also wrote to the Attorney General's department seeking its advice on the question of whether the ships were 'to be regarded as public or private vessels and what regulations and administrative procedures could be applied [to them] while they were in Australian ports and waters' (Kevin 1956b). This was of importance to the government since there is a vast difference between local laws and regulations in relation to a 'public ship' and a 'private ship'. Public vessels include state-owned vessels, which are on government and non-commercial service, as the Soviet ships were, and international law relating to public vessels is concerned in the main with the extent to which they are entitled to immunity from legal process. Since the ships belonged to a country with which

Australia had no diplomatic relations and was looked on as an adversary in the prevailing cold war climate prevalent at the time, the Australian government would have preferred to keep a tight rein on Soviet activities on the Australian mainland, even if it could not do so on what it regarded as its own territory in Antarctica.

The preliminary opinion of the Attorney General's department was that the Soviet ships were in fact public vessels and that there were two differing views as to how they should be treated. One was that administrative procedures such as boarding, customs inspection, the making of returns, the obtaining of permits on the payment of taxes (as distinct from paying for services) would be inapplicable to these vessels, whereas the other stated that such a vessel was bound to observe the ordinary laws of the port such as quarantine and sanitary regulations, and not to assist in breaches of local revenue laws. Quoting international law authorities, the department continued that any failure to respect these laws and regulations would be a ground for diplomatic representations, and possibly for expulsion (Department of External Affairs 1956b). The Department of External Affairs would have liked to apply the harsher conditions, but was unsure of the finer points of international shipping law, and the search for an unambiguous legal opinion continued.

The Australian authorities were expecting *Ob* to visit an Australian port, as the TASS message of 29 February suggested, but in fact it was *Lena* that arrived in Adelaide on 28 March with 'no prior notification from the Soviet Government' (Kevin 1956c). The Australian Government was faced with a dilemma: advice from the Attorney General's department indicated that the ship was a public vessel, but a major concern for the Government was the limited control that could be exercised over such ship. In a note to the Prime Minister, an unidentified official, possibly from the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) considered different scenarios: if the ship's master would be 'prepared to waive the normal immunities in this case, ASIO's job would be facilitated and certain restrictions could be placed on the crew and passengers'. If, on the other hand, the master claimed that the ship was a public one and refused to submit to controls, were facilities to be extended? 'In this case awkward political questions could arise, for neither crew nor passengers could be kept under proper surveillance'. The suggestion was made that in view of the proximity of important defence establishments to Adelaide (relating to the cooperative Australian-British rocket and atomic test programme), security considerations were paramount and that facilities should 'be granted only on the condition that the master of *Lena* agreed to waive the immunities that normally applied to a public ship' (Prime Minister's office 1956). The prevailing anti-communist mindset maintained that the Soviets were untrustworthy and had to be kept under surveillance in order to prevent them from coming into contact with any sensitive information relating to western strategic and defence capabilities.

Meanwhile, the question concerning the ships' legal status and how they should be treated was still unresolved. It was decided that a conference of representatives from the Departments of External Affairs, Customs and Excise, Immigration, Health, and the Prime Minister's and Attorney General's offices should be held at the Department of External Affairs on 23 March 1956 to prepare a submission to the Cabinet concerning how to treat the Soviet vessels. In his report of the conference to the Minister of External Affairs, R. Casey, Kevin wrote that the conference felt that '*Lena* should be treated as a private vessel but without declaring to the ship's master' that that status was attributed to her. To avoid any charges of discrimination a crew muster should not be required, but the ship's master should be asked to produce a list of his crew and passengers; and that if any of the crew or passengers were to go ashore, 'they must carry papers of identity'. In making these suggestions, the conference was influenced by the fact that the Cabinet, when it settled its reply to the Russian note of November 1955, had agreed that 'the expedition ship and its personnel would be subject in Australia to local jurisdiction and regulations' (Kevin 1956c). The Cabinet, in its Decision No. 114 of 23 March, noted that *Lena* was to arrive in Adelaide on 25 March and that the question arose as to whether she was to be treated as a public or as a private vessel. The Cabinet decided that *Lena* should be treated as any other passenger ship would be treated and that its personnel would be subject to local jurisdiction and regulations. This would allow adequate control of the Soviet visitors and would perhaps provide the opportunity for closer surveillance. The question of whether *Lena* was formally a public or private vessel should not be pursued (Cabinet Office 1956). Further advice was however, sought by the Department of External Affairs from the United Kingdom government concerning how it defined public vessels and what facilities and immunities it accorded their crews, as well as its treatment of aircraft, as these questions were likely to arise before and during the IGY (Department of External Affairs 1956c).

It appears that the whole point surrounding whether the vessel was public or private, which had aroused such official concern, was the fact that it belonged to a potential enemy. There was no question about any potential threat from vessels belonging to Australian allies. However much Australia would have liked to keep the USSR out of Antarctica and the Australian mainland, Australian involvement in the IGY programme made it impossible to refuse to deal with the Soviets and their scientific expedition. Although the programme itself was scientific and avowedly non-political, the intrusion of cold war tensions made the participants suspect each other of using science to gain maximum political and strategic advantage by expanding their sphere of influence and consolidating their presence in the region. Political considerations could not be totally excluded from purported scientific interactions and would often threaten to surface and put in jeopardy the non-political cooperative spirit of the IGY.

### *Lena* arrives

*Lena* arrived at Port Adelaide on 28 March 1956 to load a full cargo of Australian barley for German buyers. This was not, of course, the ship's primary activity and did not render her 'commercial' with regard to international law. The ship's complement consisted of 65 members of the crew and 81 passengers, all of Soviet nationality. Included in the passengers were a few scientists but the greater number were artisans who had been employed in the erection of the scientific base in the Antarctic. Each person on board was in possession of a valid Soviet seamen's passport. These, after examination by the boarding officer, 'were returned to the grantees so that the request made to the master that each person going ashore should be in possession of his or her passport could be complied with'. Everything went smoothly and all formalities were fulfilled, reported the migration officer for South Australia, G.A.M. Edson (Edson 1956).

After their long Antarctic journey, the crew and passengers on *Lena* were keen to go ashore and to explore the city. Hodirev recalled that when the vessel arrived in Adelaide, the ship's Communist Party political officer, whose duty it was to ensure that everyone on board was drilled in party policy, and was appropriately patriotic, attempted to forbid anyone on the ship from going ashore. He was apparently afraid of provocation from Russian *émigrés*, as it was usual for them to hand out anti-Soviet propaganda to visitors from the USSR and to encourage them to defect. However, the young party members on board convened a meeting at which they overrode the decision not to leave the ship, deciding that they would go ashore, as long as they did not go alone, but in groups of three. In ports, which were visited by Soviet ships, these groups of three were known as 'Russian troikas' (Strugatskiy 2006c) until the practice ceased with the period of glasnost [openness] and the eventual break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991.

The Australian Antarctic explorer, Sir Douglas Mawson, was one of the first to visit the ship, to which the public was allowed free access during its stay in port (Figs. 5, 6). The Australia-USSR Friendship Society (founded in 1939) assumed an active role in organising onshore tours and meetings with local scientists, workers and youth. Two press conferences were held and an official visit was paid to the mayor of the city (Nudelman 1959: 18). Besides the interest shown by the public and scientists, Australian authorities showed interest of another nature. *Lena's* visit provided an opportunity to obtain 'information of value' to naval intelligence, so arrangements were made to exploit it. Two civilians, rather than naval intelligence officers, boarded the ship while it was open to the public, making sure that the suspicions of the Russians were not aroused, reported a secretary of the Australian Department of the Navy to the Department of External Affairs on 9 May 1956 (Department of the Navy 1956). What this clandestinely obtained 'information of value' could have been is hard to fathom, as the scientists were quite willing to share their

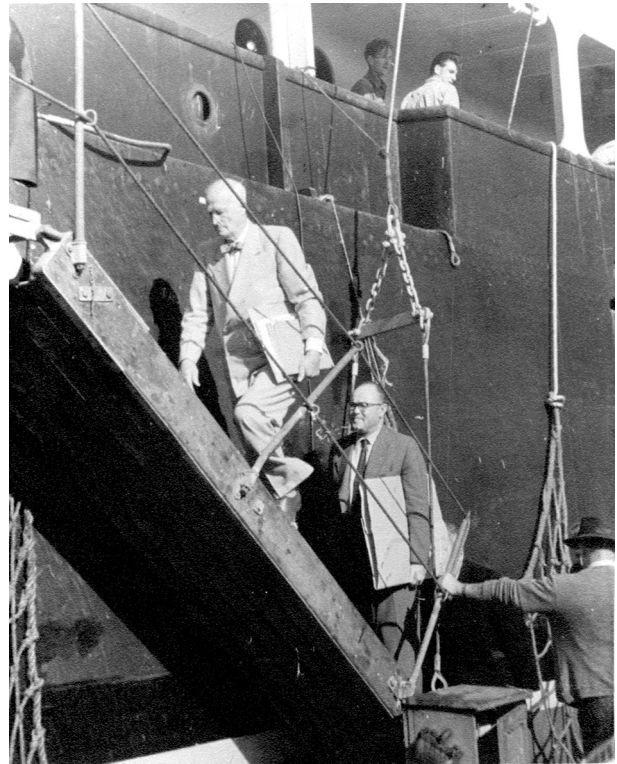


Fig. 5. D. Mawson (left) aboard *Lena* in Adelaide. The other person is M. Glaessner. (photo from South Australian Museum).



Fig. 6. D. Mawson alongside *Lena* in Adelaide. (Left to right, D. Mawson, T. Tupikina-Glaessner (?), M. Glaessner) (photo from South Australian Museum).

knowledge and to demonstrate equipment to anybody who was interested as was shown in New Zealand when 'the *Ob* was thrown open for public inspection. . . through which they [the public] were apparently permitted to wander without obstruction' (Hall 1956b).

It would seem that the government's focus on the use of intelligence officers rather than providing encouragement to its scientific community to interact and exchange information compromised both the quality of information and the spirit of the IGY. Even though loading operations



Fig. 7. Landing on Macquarie Island under the watchful eye of Captain Man (photo from the personal collection of R. Dingle).

were completed, *Lena's* departure was delayed for a few days due to the ship's financial commitments with the agent, and she finally cleared Port Adelaide direct for Hamburg at 08.15 hours on 13 April 1956 (Edson 1956). Before departing, Captain Vetrov sent Mawson a telegram thanking him for his attention and kindness during the ship's stay in Adelaide (Vetrov 1956). *Lena* returned to Leningrad on 8 June 1956.

#### ***Ob* at Macquarie Island and in New Zealand**

During the time that *Lena* was in Adelaide, I. Adams, the leader of the Macquarie Island station, received a request from *Ob* on 2 April 1956 that she be permitted to call in and inspect the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition's (ANARE) oldest station. A. Brown, one of the radio officers on the island, wrote that 'there was much running around in Canberra when we sent the Russian request back to ANARE headquarters in Melbourne, but to their credit, Canberra gave us permission to allow the Russians ashore' (A. Brown, personal communication, December 2007). This was the first time that a Russian ship had visited Macquarie Island since the sloops *Vostok* and *Mirny* of Bellingshausen's first Russian Antarctic expedition had charted its coastline and conducted scientific investigations in November 1820, and the first foreign ship to have visited the station since it was opened in 1948. In anticipation of the visit, the Australians took the opportunity of writing letters home, as they felt sure that *Ob* would take them to send on.

The next day, 3 April, twelve people (according to Suzyumov, who named each one), but thirteen according to the recollections of the Australians, from *Ob* came ashore, including the head of the expedition Professor Kort, Captain Man and the scientific secretary of the expedition Suzyumov, who 'took lengthy notes on everything during the whole stay' (Adams 1956: 84) (Figs. 7, 8, 9). The visit, which was to last one day, turned into two due to deteriorating weather conditions, as it became too dangerous to return to the ship in the dark (Suzyumov 1958b: 216). The following day, after a difficult operation in the heavy surf, the Australians managed to get the



Fig. 8. Five members of the Russian team (names unknown) safe ashore. Second from left on front row is Kent Keith, Australian biologist (photo from the personal collection of R. Dingle).



Fig. 9. *Ob's* launch anchored some distance offshore to avoid kelp (photo from the personal collection of R. Dingle).

Soviet personnel back to their vessel. Adams and two Australians accompanied their visitors to *Ob*, where they 'were given a rousing welcome as [they] walked up the gangway in front of whirring movie cameras' (A. Brown, personal communication, December 2007). They were shown the facilities and presented with all manner of gifts including clothing, wine, vodka, books and Soviet postage stamps. Overall, 'a very friendly atmosphere was apparent' (Adams 1956: 84). When *Ob* finally departed the unanimous opinion of the Australians was that 'there's nothing wrong with the Russian people – the fault must be their system!' (A. Brown, personal communication, December 2007). Soon after they left, Kort and Man sent a radio message thanking the Australians for their hospitality:

DEAR MR ADAMS LEAVING SHORE OF  
MACQUARIE ISLAND WE WISH GOOD LUCK  
YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES AND THANK  
YOU FOR A CORDIAL HOSPITALITY STOP  
YOU HAVE GIVEN US VERY GREAT IMPRES-  
SION VISITING OF ISLAND MAKING AC-  
QUAINTANCE WITH YOU AND YOUR BRAVE

BEHAVIOUR DURING LANDING AND DEPARTURE STOP WISH YOU AND ALL OF YOUR COLLEAGUES GOOD HEALTH ON THE GREAT SUCCESS IN YOUR SCIENTIFIC WORK (A. Brown, personal communication, December 2007).

The visit had succeeded in establishing an atmosphere of good will and a genuine desire from all sides to continue friendly relations.

After leaving Macquarie Island, *Ob* continued its work of mapping the New Zealand oceanic ridge. Man wrote that because the ship was so close to New Zealand, which was a participant in the IGY programme, it was considered 'a duty' to call in to Wellington on a courtesy visit and at the same time to take on fuel, water and fresh produce (Man 2006: 77–78). The visit to New Zealand's capital city was not planned and was totally unexpected by the New Zealand government whose cold war politics and attitude to the Soviet presence in Antarctica were very similar to those held by the US and Australia, although New Zealand, as opposed to Australia, had not had a rupture in diplomatic relations with the USSR.

The occasion for the rupture in April 1954, was the defection of the third secretary of the then Soviet Embassy in Canberra, Vladimir Petrov (1907–1991), who, with the assistance of ASIO, had decided to seek political asylum in Australia. His wife Evdokia (1914–2002) sought asylum several days later at Darwin airport while being escorted back to Moscow by Soviet diplomatic couriers. Petrov, who had the rank of colonel in the Soviet intelligence service, and his wife, who had the rank of captain, provided details of an alleged communist spy network in Australia to a Royal Commission on Espionage specially appointed to investigate their claims. As a protest at the role played by the Australian government in the defection, the USSR closed its embassy in Canberra on 29 April 1954 and expelled the Australian legation from Moscow. Relations between the Soviet Union and Australia ended and remained suspended for a period of five years resuming only on 2 June 1959 (Petrov 1956; Manne 1987: 90)

The Australian High Commission in Wellington reported to the Australian Department of External Affairs in Canberra that the New Zealand authorities were unenthusiastic about the visit and did not intend to make any particular arrangements, as they considered that the Soviet legation in New Zealand would use the visit for propaganda purposes (Hall 1956a). On 6 April, an *Aide Memoire* was handed to the Soviet *Chargé d'Affaires*, K. Efremov, laying down the procedure to be followed on arrival of *Ob* in Wellington. As a ship employed on a scientific expedition, it would be treated as a public vessel and 'exempted from the normal pilotage dues as well as harbour, port and wharfage dues', but not normal customs and health formalities. On arrival, customs, health and police officials would, in accordance with normal procedure, visit the vessel. 'Two members of the Soviet Legation [were to] accompany the boarding party. The Captain and the ship's doctor would be interviewed,

and six copies of a list giving the names of all personnel on the ship would be required. The ship's register was to be inspected' (Ministry of External Affairs, New Zealand 1956).

The Soviet legation was asked to provide information concerning the probable duration of the ship's stay, any repair facilities required, and whether shore leave would be granted to members of the ship's company. In the event of shore leave being granted, it would be necessary to inform the police authorities at the Central Police Station in Wellington of the number of personnel proceeding ashore and the time for which leave had been granted. Water, provisions and other supplies were to be procured by the vessel through normal commercial channels (Ministry of External Affairs, New Zealand 1956a). Much to the chagrin of the New Zealand authorities, no reply was received from the legation and no answers to the questions were forthcoming (Ministry of External Affairs, New Zealand 1956b).

In the event, the ship was, on arrival, boarded by the customs, health and police officials, members of the Soviet legation and representatives of the press. 'The officials confined themselves to formalities and accepted the assurances of the captain that the regulations would be complied with. Copies of a list detailing the persons on board were provided as requested. In all, there were 119 persons on the ship, including 58 scientists'. (Department of External Affairs, New Zealand 1956b). After berthing on the afternoon of 9 April, Man, who spoke some English, met representatives of the press and explained through an interpreter that while the ship was taking on fresh water and supplies, 'the main reason for the visit was to bring good wishes to New Zealand. He spoke of the establishment of the Soviet Antarctic base Mirny, emphasising that this was part of the USSR's contribution to the IGY. He explained that *Ob* would proceed to Adelaide and then pass through Antarctic waters again on scientific work before its return to the Soviet Union' (Hall 1956b).

The Australian High Commission in Wellington further reported that, on 10 April, in spite of earlier attempts by the New Zealand Department of External Affairs at discouragement (probably because they were afraid of Soviet propaganda and influence) Man, Kort, Suzuymov, and Efremov paid official calls first on the Deputy Prime Minister, K.J. Holyoake, who had visited the Soviet Union the previous year, and then on the Prime Minister, S.G. Holland, the leaders of the National Party government. The minister in charge of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, R.M. Algie and the Minister for External Affairs, T.L. Macdonald were with the Prime Minister. A call was also paid on the Mayor of Wellington, R.M. MacAllister, who according to Suzuymov, was most helpful, offering the Soviet scientists and sailors freedom of the city and providing them with full cooperation and hospitality (Suzuymov 1958b: 217).

Later the same day, the Prime Minister, accompanied by Algie, visited *Ob* for an hour. They were shown



scientific work in progress and were given refreshments. Invitations to visit the ship were issued to scientists and other selected individuals, and on the afternoon of 10 April, *Ob* was opened to the public for a four hour period, during which time 1426 visitors came aboard. Visiting times were extended due to the large number of people wanting to inspect the ship, and, in total, over 3,000 people were able to see the onboard facilities (Suzyumov 1958b: 221, 222). They were permitted 'to wander about without obstruction'; scientists were in their laboratories in order to explain the instruments to the public, and a large number of charts and navigational aids were on view (Hall 1956b).

A formal reception in honour of Man and Kort was given by the Soviet legation on 11 April at which 200 people including members of the New Zealand government and the New Zealand parliament, scientists and public were present (Suzyumov 1958b: 217). There were a number of contacts between the Soviet scientists and New Zealand scientists. Kort offered to give a lecture about the results of Soviet exploration in the Antarctic, and this was arranged under the auspices of the Royal Society of New Zealand (Wellington branch). Speaking through an interpreter, Kort began by saying that he believed that the 'meeting will help in the cause of the common knowledge of science and the common interest of both countries'. He outlined some of the oceanographic research carried out on *Ob* during its 5,200 mile voyage from when it left Mirny on 29 February until it docked in Wellington (Kort 1956).

'Throughout *Ob*'s visit, every effort was made by the Soviet legation and the ship's officers and company to cultivate the goodwill of the public and of the Government. Political subjects were eschewed by all concerned in order to ensure that the spirit of good will prevailed. The ship's officers were cooperative and carried out all instructions from local officials. No disorderliness or other difficulties with members of the ship's company ashore were reported' (Department of External Affairs, NZ 1956).

Suzyumov mentions with a sense of pride that he was told that the cooperative behaviour of the Soviet expedition was in marked contrast to the behaviour of the American Antarctic expedition which had visited Wellington earlier: the American navy men had not been quite so orderly and their antics had delayed their vessel's departure by 24 hours (Suzyumov 1958a: 268). It appears that the visit developed rather further than had been expected or hoped by the New Zealand authorities, or at least by the Department of External Affairs, at which the Soviet Legation's insistence that *Ob* had come on a courtesy visit had initially been resisted. The friendliness and openness of the Soviet crew and scientists, together with the natural curiosity of the New Zealand public, made it difficult to confine the visit to a mere taking on of supplies. There was little in the words or behaviour of the visitors to which exception could be taken. They stressed throughout the importance of international cooperation in

attaining the scientific objectives of the IGY (Hall 1956b). The visit had taken on a high profile, notwithstanding the attempts of the Department of External Affairs of New Zealand to keep it low key. If building cordial relations was the Soviet aim, it was certainly a success. The Department, however, considered that the Soviet legation was intent upon deriving maximum political capital from the occasion and were especially piqued by the fact that the legation showed no disposition to comply with formal requests made by the department and had achieved all that it wanted. This was indeed the case. The visit developed friendly relations with government ministers, scientists and the general public and had presented impressive scientific capabilities in preparing for the IGY programme, thereby raising the international prestige of the USSR. The visit was indeed one of courtesy and certainly not intended to cause offence: it seems in retrospect somewhat unfortunate that the department felt it necessary to register a formal protest at the failure of the legation to provide answers to the questions asked about *Ob*'s visit (Department of External Affairs, NZ 1956).

#### *Ob* in Australia

*Ob* left New Zealand on 12 April to continue her oceanographic studies in the Tasman Sea *en route* to Adelaide where she arrived on 21 April (Suzyumov 1958b: 222) to take on a load of barley for delivery to Germany. As soon as the vessel had docked, Professor M. Glaessner, who had been a member of the faculty at Moscow University after leaving Vienna in around 1936 and who later had emigrated to Australia to join the University of Adelaide (P. Webb, personal communications, 19 and 26 July 2007), came on board with an invitation from Sir Douglas Mawson for twelve members of staff to have lunch at the Mawson residence the next day, 22 April. Mawson was held in extremely high regard by the Soviets, so much so that Suzyumov would publish the first biography of the Australian explorer in 1960 (Suzyumov 1960). He wrote of Mawson that, as a contemporary of Scott, Shackleton, Amundsen and Nansen, he and his expedition distinguished themselves by their purposeful investigations and scientific output (Suzyumov 1960). Suzyumov's biography of Mawson was later translated into English and published by the Libraries Board of South Australia in 1968 (Suzyumov 1968). The Soviets were impressed by the cordial reception and stimulating exchange of views on Antarctic research accorded to them by the Mawsons. The day after entertaining the Soviet visitors, Mawson, his wife Paquita, and Glaessner toured *Ob*, where they spent almost the whole day. They were interested in meeting the expedition staff and inspecting facilities, paying special attention to the geological and hydro-chemical laboratories. After the tour, a reception was held in honour of the esteemed visitor. Mawson congratulated the Soviet scientists on the extent of their research and wished them every success in their scientific endeavours. The following day, 24

April, Mawson again visited the ship, accompanied by Phillip G. Law, the Director of the Australian Antarctic Division of the Department of External Affairs, who had flown in from Melbourne. They brought with them some 50 volumes of Australian Antarctic research literature, which they presented to the ship. Man asked Mawson to 'express himself' in the visitors' book, in which Mawson wrote:

To captain Man, Professor Kort and all Scientific Staff, Officers and crew of the exploring vessel *Ob*. Your splendid organization, excellent equipment and able personnel operating all departments of activity have greatly impressed me. I am convinced that the results of your Russian Antarctic Expedition cooperating in the scientific programme of the IGY will very greatly advance knowledge, in all departments of science, concerning the Far Southern Regions. [I sincerely believe that our friendly relations will bring mutual benefit for the scientific work undertaken by Australia and Russia] May this friendly association in scientific endeavour lead the way to wider international cooperation and understanding. Best wishes and good luck in the prosecution of your work.

The sentence in brackets is omitted in Mawson's letter to Casey in which he quoted his writing (Mawson 1956), although it appears in Suzyumov's version of the text (Suzyumov 1958a: 289–290). On the evening of 24 April, a large group of scientists from the ship attended a lecture by Law, which was delivered in the Mawson building of the University of Adelaide. Mawson himself said a few introductory words in which he welcomed the Soviet guests and looked forward to further strengthening relations between the Soviet and Australian researchers. Law continued with his lecture about the Australian 1956 expedition on *Kista Dan*, accompanied by a colour slide show. He was followed by Kort, who spoke briefly about the goals of Soviet Antarctic research in preparing for the IGY and undertaking oceanographic research in the southern ocean (Suzyumov 1958b: 223). Friendly relations developed with many academics from the University of Adelaide and visits arranged to the mining, biology and other faculties, as well as the Bureau of Meteorology. The Australia–USSR Friendship Society organised sightseeing and study excursions around Adelaide and its environs, as well as a meeting of the eight Soviet women scientists on board (M. Klyonova, N. Tsouprinova, F. Borodina, V. Dolganova, E. Mitineva, A. Ilyina, L. Boltayevskaya and V. Bushmanova) with a group of Australian women. Suzyumov believed that Mawson played a key role in forging these fruitful relations and in creating an atmosphere of friendship and understanding, which he realised was not an easy task, as there were no diplomatic relations between Australia and USSR (Suzyumov 1958b: 223). These sentiments were later echoed by Somov, the overall leader of the Soviet expedition, who in a telegram expressed his 'gratitude to the Australian people, Douglas Mawson and Philip Law for their care to our expedition ships *Lena* and *Ob* at their stay in Adelaide' (Donovan 1956).

On 25 April, Mawson reported on his visit to the Soviet ship to Casey, Minister of External Affairs, and expressed the view that it was an outstanding opportunity for Australians interested in oceanography to examine the latest specialised equipment, as much of the work that was routine on board *Ob* had never been attempted by Australians in their seas. He seemed to chide the government for not showing a more active interest in the ship's visit, saying that since the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation was proceeding to develop the science of oceanography, an opportunity to view the latest technology and learn of the research that had been conducted had been lost. All the more so, since the expedition staff had without hesitation given all information sought concerning the detail of their plans, equipment and discoveries and readily acknowledged prior work done by Australian expeditions. Mawson attempted to allay any fears about Soviet intentions, saying that he did not expect that Russia would lay claim to the Australian Antarctic Territory. However, he considered that it must be greatly encouraged to do so by the USA failure to recognise Australia's claims and that if Russia did stay in Queen Mary Land at the conclusion of the IGY, the blame must be squarely borne by the USA. Acknowledging the government's concerns, he wrote: 'I see nothing directly political in their visit, only a desire for friendly relations and a desire for scientists, of what is destined to be a really famous expedition, to meet Australian scientists in like subjects' (Ayres 1999: 255–256).

Casey concurred with Mawson's conclusion that the scientific personnel on *Ob* were concerned solely with scientific matters, as he wrote to the Defence Minister, Sir Philip McBride on 27 April, but was nonetheless wary of the fact that 'the results of the oceanographic research could be of direct, practical value to the Russian Navy, particularly on the submarine side. The Russian scientists would not need to know anything about the end use of their researches by the Soviet Naval establishment' (Casey 1956).

Casey considered that the possibility that the Soviets would build a military base in the AAT was very real, and had asked Law to look for signs of military activity at Mirny when the Australians had visited the Soviet station on 30 January 1956. Law had written a full report of his visit and helped allay Casey's fears by noting that the expedition appeared to be civilian (Law 1956).

While in Adelaide, *Ob* received an invitation to visit Melbourne from the chairman of the Australia–USSR friendship society, John Rodgers (*The Age* (Melbourne) 25 April 1956). Both Kort and Man expressed their desire to go and offered to take Mawson on the voyage for him to observe their equipment and staff in operation. Rodgers sent Casey an urgent telegram asking the government to approve the visit. Casey, however, was not prepared to make such approval: in his reply, he reiterated the Australian Government's position that, while it had agreed that transit and servicing would be available in Australia for the ships and aircraft of any country participating in

the IGY, the occasion of such visits did not appear to call for any special arrangements. This was his diplomatic way of saying that approval for the requested 'special arrangements' was out of the question because only facilities that were strictly necessary were to be provided. The Soviets believed that Mawson was doing everything possible to make the visit a reality, but was being thwarted by Law, who was against the visit to Melbourne, which was the location of the headquarters of the Antarctic division. They were of the opinion that Law was not interested in raising the international prestige of the Soviets by having them display their superior level of technology and quality of research to the Australian scientists (Arctic and Antarctic Institute 1956: 209).

A further telegram to Casey, this time asking for his assistance in having *Ob* call into Sydney, was sent by the acting federal secretary of the Building Workers' Industrial Union, but Casey's reply was identical to the one given to Rodgers. Casey was certainly being consistent and steadfast in his policy of rejecting the possibility of any special arrangements for the Soviet expedition. His reluctant attitude was virtually identical to the attitude displayed by the Department of External Affairs in New Zealand, but his job was made easier by the lack of diplomatic relations between Australia and the USSR. In New Zealand, the opportunities for more robust contacts with politicians and scientists were made easier by the presence of a Soviet legation, whereas in Australia the expedition did not have the support and connections of an embassy to assist them with their interactions with the Australian government. The expedition was more reliant on the good will of individual scientists such as Mawson, who had limited political influence, as well as organisations such as the Australia–USSR Friendship Society and trade unions. These had little sway with the government which suspected them of being communist sympathisers. The Australian Antarctic Division was a part of the Department of External Affairs, and as such was instrumental in transmitting government policy and unable to play a welcoming role to its Soviet scientific colleagues. Consequently, the Australian government was more successful than New Zealand in 'containing' the Soviet visit within strict boundaries, thus limiting any impact that it may have made on the broader public.

Some members of the public, however, did not understand the government's reluctance to widen the scope of the visit. Casey received a telegram from a Clive and Joan Jackson: 'ban ship *Ob* ridiculous are you frightened few Soviet explorers' (Jackson and Jackson 1956). There also did not appear to be a shortage of members of the general public interested in visiting the ship, which was berthed in Port Adelaide, 10 km from the city. A large number of people came aboard on the ANZAC day holiday on 25 April, with approximately 5,000 visiting on Sunday 29 April, the day before its scheduled departure. In total, over 10,000 people were able to look over the ship during its stay in Adelaide (Suzyumov 1958b: 228). On 30 April, the day of *Ob*'s departure for Hamburg a reception was held in honour of the Soviet personnel, with



Fig. 10. Return of *Ob* to Leningrad (photo by N. Naumenkov from Archives of Cino and Photo Documents, Krasnogorsk, Russia).

50 scientists from the University of Adelaide attending. The president of the scientific club, Professor F. Bull expressed an overall feeling of satisfaction about the visit and concerning the broad scientific contacts that were established between Australian scientists and their Soviet colleagues (Suzyumov 1958b: 225). Prior to departure, the master publicly expressed on behalf of the ship's personnel and himself, his pleasure at a most enjoyable stay in Port Adelaide.

*Ob* returned to Leningrad on 8 July 1956 after calling in to Kerguelen on 20 May and unloading in Hamburg from 27 June to 4 July (Suzyumov 1958b: 229) (Fig. 10). During the whole voyage, *Ob* had covered 33,000 miles, 4,000 of those in ice conditions and 1,040 in shallow waters with no navigational charts and research work was conducted over 20,000 miles. Observations were made at 156 deep water oceanographic stations, 57 of which were in Antarctic coastal waters (Somov 1957: 12). The first composite Soviet Antarctic expedition was an ambitious project requiring considerable government funding and the Soviet government considered itself fortunate that it was able to charter *Ob* and *Lena* to deliver grain from Adelaide to Hamburg for a total sum of £100,000 (which exceeded one million gold roubles when converted into Soviet currency) on the return journey from Antarctica. The charter enabled it to recoup over 70% of the Antarctic expedition's foreign currency expenses (Bakayev 1956).

The expedition had fulfilled its primary task of building a base on the Antarctic continent and conducting multifaceted research in the South Polar region. The USSR Academy of Sciences published the scientific reports of the marine component of the expedition in *Opisanie ekspeditsii na d/e 'Ob' 1955–1956* [An account of the expedition on the diesel/electric ship 'Ob' 1955–1956] (Bardin 1958) and the *General description of the first continental expedition 1955–1957* in 1959 (Somov 1959), as well as many articles in scientific journals. However, in a meeting with the chief of Glavsevmorput, Burhanov, the scientists reported that in addition to the scientific achievements, a particularly important aspect of the expedition was the development of co-operation with scientists of other countries, especially the meetings with Australian expedition staff on *Kista Dan* and with

scientists in Wellington and Adelaide (Glavsevmorput 1956).

### Conclusion

Some documents on this matter held in the NAA are still listed as restricted, while in the case of the Russian archives documents that are restricted do not appear in the catalogues at all. However those documents that are available illustrate the concerns that the Australian and New Zealand governments held about the intentions of the Soviet Antarctic programme and their lack of enthusiasm for *Ob* and *Lena* entering their ports. The governments considered ways of limiting any political impact that the visits may have made and ultimately refused to provide anything more than the facilities that they reluctantly offered to the expeditionary vessels. A variety of factors, including the fear of a Soviet Antarctic claim and defence implications were considered in formulating this policy, however the fear of international opprobrium made it impossible for the two governments to follow their preferred option of totally denying access to their ports. While reluctantly allowing the vessels access, the governments sought ways of controlling them and their passengers during their stay in order to prevent the visit from acquiring a high profile and thus raising the prestige of a country considered to be an enemy. It also gave the authorities the opportunity of greater surveillance in case the visitors attempted to gather intelligence covertly, especially at the sensitive atomic and rocket research laboratories located in Adelaide, as well as sending their own intelligence agents on board in order to collect any potentially 'valuable information'. While nominally adhering to the non-political scientific intention of the IGY, the authorities' political and security considerations were the actual factors operating when dealing with the Soviet visitors.

In contrast, a more fruitful and less politically fraught approach was epitomised by Mawson, who visited the ships several times during their stay, developed amiable relations and encouraged his colleagues at the University of Adelaide to do likewise. In a letter to Casey, he suggested that scientists from CSIRO be encouraged to inspect the ships, since the Soviet scientists were quite happy to share their research results and allow access to their equipment. Permitting greater freedom of movement between different ports, which the government discouraged, would have allowed a larger number of Australian scientists to inspect the Soviet facilities and collect more valuable information than that acquired by civilian intelligence officers, a method which the authorities seemed to favour.

Although the government's reluctance limited the number of Australian scientists who were able to visit the ships, Mawson acted as a catalyst in creating an environment in the Adelaide scientific community that was more conducive to scientific interaction with the Soviets. The main interest of the scientists from both

sides was the acquisition and exchange of knowledge, which became the common ground for forging lasting relationships and even friendships. An Australian expedition member expressed the commonly held perception that the Australians 'found the Russians a friendly, sincere and polite lot who were always eager to share their aspirations with us, including their scientific results. I was very impressed, and so was everyone else in our expedition. We also established firm friendships with some individuals' (A. Brown, personal communication, December 2007). Mawson was hopeful that this association in scientific endeavour would have wider repercussions and lead to international co-operation and understanding. His opinion that 'if only the scientists of Russia were in political power, all would be well' (Mawson 1957) could at that time have equally applied to the scientists of Australia.

Notwithstanding governmental suspicion and reluctance, it would seem that, on this occasion at least, the Soviet visitors had no sinister ulterior motives. The premier of the USSR, Nikita Khrushchev, in March 1956 said that after Stalin's death in March 1953, the Soviets had 'convincingly proved our peace-making nature, and we will continue to prove it' (Zubok and Pleshakov 1996: 185). The behaviour of the Soviet personnel was in accordance with Khrushchev's declaration: their professed intention was to build 'good will', and judging by the level of scientific and human interaction, their courtesy visits to Macquarie Island and New Zealand and their stop in Australia did in fact lead to a greater understanding and cooperation with the scientists of Australia and New Zealand, which continued during and after the IGY.

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