

Chile, the International Geophysical Year, and the Antarctic

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ABSTRACT. This note draws attention to the fact the formal motion presented at the first International Geophysical Year (IGY) Antarctic Conference, recommending that the aims of the conference were exclusively scientific was proposed by the Chilean delegation.

There is an aspect of the importance of the Chilean participation in the IGY and the Antarctic that is often overlooked or forgotten. At the first IGY Antarctic Conference in Paris held between 6 and 10 July 1955 (Nicolet 1959) the president of the conference, Georges Laclavère who later became the first president of the Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research (SCAR), emphasised the technical character of the conference and said that financial and political questions were not its concern. The leader of the Chilean delegation, Ambassador J. Rossetti, supported this point of view and presented the following motion which was seconded by

the leader of the Argentine delegation, Ambassador J.A. de Tezanos Pintos: ‘The Antarctic Conference entirely endorses M. Laclavère’s statement of the purposes at the opening session and specifically his affirmation that the over-all aims of the Conference are exclusively scientific’. The motion was adopted unanimously (Nicolet 1959: 397).

A number of points arise: 1) The motion was proposed by the ambassadors of two of the participating countries (both of which had made claims to part of the Antarctic) and some other countries were represented by staff from embassies or consulates; 2) the fact that political questions were excluded from the beginning may have had some importance in the creation of the atmosphere that proved so useful when the Antarctic Treaty discussions were later initiated; 3) the Academy of Sciences of the USSR was represented by V.V. Belousov, a geophysicist, who later became a vice-president of the International Council of Scientific Unions Special Committee for the IGY and, to an important extent, this heralded the Soviet/Russian participation in Antarctic research after a long period of absence.

Reference

Nicolet, M. (editor). 1959. *Annals of the International Geophysical Year. Vol IIB.* London: Pergamon Press: 397–420.