

2nd Workshop of the SCAR Action Group on the History of Antarctic Research in Santiago (Chile), 21 to 22 September 2006

The 2nd workshop of the SCAR History AG dealt with “Multidimensional exploration of Antarctica around the 1950s”. It took place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Santiago de Chile. Thanks to our colleague Jorge Berguño from the Chilean Antarctic Institute local organisation was just perfect. 21 participants came from seven countries (Argentina, Chile, Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden, Tasmania (Australia) and the United States.

José Retamales, Director of the Instituto Antartico Chileno in Punta Arenas opened the workshop. In addition, Mariano A. Memolli, director Nacional del Antartico, and Jan Huber, director of the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat, had come from Buenos Aires. By their presence they showed, not only how important history is for them, but also that history is part of Antarctic research. A reporter made several interviews and wrote about the workshop on the Internet.

Thirteen papers were given, which dealt with the path from exploration to co-operation within the polar years as well as the discussions about German naming and a new map of Antarctica in the early 1950s. One set of papers focussed on Chilean Antarctic science from the mid-40s to the end of the 50s, India and Antarctica in 1956, the U.S. Antarctic intentions in the mid-1950s, and the US Antarctic policy in the 50s. A description of Soviet preparations for the IGY Antarctic program was contrasted by the Australian response referring to politics and science. The logic of risk assessment in the planning for the IGY was also considered. A second set of papers dealt with the intellectual sources of the Antarctic Treaty, the British initiatives in the making of an Antarctic Treaty, and the policy behind the Belgian-Dutch Antarctic co-operation in the 1960's. The early European attempt to launch an Ice Coring Project in Antarctica long before EPICA was discussed at the end.

The second history workshop was held in Santiago to facilitate the participation of colleagues from South America and to open the discussion on the history of Antarctic research to scholars of countries neighbouring Antarctica. This worked out perfectly. Eleven participants came from Chile and five from Argentina, which lead to very interesting discussions of inside and outside views on the problems of the Antarctic Peninsula. The mixture of PhD students, historians, historians of science, and Antarctic veterans, as well as experts on the Antarctic Treaty System resulted in very lively and exciting discussions and comments. Lunch and dinner at a very nice restaurant helped to deepen the personal contacts between the participants.

It was decided to ask if the 3rd workshop of the SCAR History AG can be organised at the Byrd Polar Institute in Columbus (USA) at the end of October 2007. The title will be “National and transnational agendas in Antarctic Research from the 1950s and beyond”.

The papers of the 2nd workshop will be published by the Chilean Antarctic Institute. The workshop was sponsored by SCAR, the Chilean Antarctic Institute and the German Society for Polar Research.

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