

# ANTARCTICA—No Longer Unknown

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Despite death and unbelievable suffering, man's quest for the unknown is shrinking the area still unexplored on the frigid waste-land called Antarctica.

A hundred years ago, no one had done more than gain the edge of the huge continent, and few had done that. It was only 50 years ago that brave men first penetrated to the South Pole. But by 1950, the "explored" territory was beginning to equal the "unexplored." Now the area awaiting its first human is melting like an ice cube in the warm sun.

Since permanent colonization has been impractical, the criss-crossing tracks of explorers have led to overlapping national claims to parts of the vast continent—whose 5-1/3 million square miles make it almost 1-1/2 of the United States.

In an attempt to reconcile differences—or at least define areas of disagreement—12 in-

terested nations recently met at Washington. They agreed that Antarctica should be used only for peaceful purposes.

The pact, subject to ratification, also would freeze the territorial status quo and encourage scientific cooperation.

The diplomatic agreement supports what explorers have learned the hard way about Antarctica: the physical battle against incredible weather and terrain is the limit of human endurance. Political conflict could bring further progress in the area to a standstill.

As early as the Middle Ages mapmakers believed a southern continent might exist. And in 1772 the English captain, James Cook, reached the Antarctic ice pack, establishing that such a continent would lay south of the 60th parallel.

Through the 1800s interest in the area was spurred by

the desire to locate the south magnetic pole, needed for more accurate navigation maps. In 1911 two great expeditions got under way in an effort to reach the geographic South Pole.

One of these groups was headed by Norwegian explorer Ronald Amundsen, the other by Britain's Robert Scott.

Amundsen placed his nation's flag at the South Pole Dec. 17. A month later Scott reached the pole only to find the Norwegians had made it first. Bitterly disappointed, he headed back with his four companions.

It was the great tragedy of Antarctic exploration. The five men died after an epic struggle against terrible cold and meager rations. The end came when they were only 11 miles from food and fuel.

The age of scientific research in Antarctic exploration followed.

The first man to fly the North Pole, US Adm. Richard Byrd, duplicated the feat at the South Pole on Nov. 28, 1929. He showed that radio and the airplane made it possible to explore broad and dangerous areas. His group

also included biologists, meteorologists, and geologists to study life in the white wilderness.

In 1946 Byrd headed the Navy's "Operation High-jump" to conduct scientific programs for training men and testing equipment under severe polar conditions. The expedition also provided the first nearly complete outline map of Antarctica's ice sheathed coast.

In the 1950s came the massive expeditions of the International Geophysical Year, marking an era of cooperation in scientific research among nations claiming Antarctic lands.

The US Operation Deep Freeze set up a South Pole station that showed a party of men could successfully come through the polar winter. Other IGY study camps were set up by the British, French, Russians, Japanese, Australians, Norwegians, Argentines and Chileans.

The Antarctic is still being probed.

And the space age has opened up new strategic possibilities for the land at the bottom of the world.