

## *A Treaty for Antarctica*

ON DECEMBER 2, 1959, the representatives of Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, the Union of South Africa, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom and the United States of America signed a treaty in Washington regarding the future conduct of international affairs in the Antarctic\*. When ratified, it will guarantee freedom of scientific research in the entire region south of 60 degrees south latitude, prohibit measures of a military nature, and, in general, ensure that the Antarctic does not become the scene or object of international discord.

The treaty is remarkable from many points of view. It shelves for 30 years complicated and long-standing problems of territorial sovereignty. It contains the first international inspection system on which the East and the West have been able to agree. It bans the explosion of nuclear devices and the disposal of radioactive wastes. It prohibits the establishment of military bases and fortifications, the carrying out of military manoeuvres or the testing of any type of weapon, and it provides for periodic consultations at appropriate times and places between the nations actively engaged in scientific pursuits in the Antarctic.

One of the primary functions of the agreement is to encourage international scientific co-operation in the Antarctic as it was applied during the International Geophysical Year. Provision is made for the exchange of scientific information between participating countries and the exchange of personnel between expeditions and stations. Each member state undertakes to advise the others of existing or proposed expeditions, to describe its stations in the Antarctic and to provide detailed information regarding military personnel or equipment in the area.

To ensure that the continent is used for peaceful purposes only, a unilateral inspection system is established whereby each signatory country actively engaged in scientific research in the Antarctic is entitled to designate an unlimited number of its nationals to act as observers. These observers are to have complete freedom of access at any time to any or all areas of Antarctica, including all stations, equipment or installations and all ships or aircraft in loading or unloading areas. Observation from the air may be carried out at any time. In carrying out these duties, the observers are subject only to the jurisdiction of the courts of their respective countries.

Accession to the treaty is open to all other members of the United Nations. Non-members of the United Nations may accede at the unanimous invitation of the original 12 plus other acceding states engaged in scientific work in the Antarctic. An acceding country that mounts a scientific expedition to the Antarctic or in some other way demonstrates its interest in the region is entitled, during such time as it continues to support "substantial scientific research activity" in the Antarctic, to appoint observers and to participate in all consultations.

\*See "External Affairs", November 1959, p. 350.