

Dividing Antarctica: The Work of the Seventh International Geographical Congress in Berlin 1899

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Abstract: Antarctic historians seldom look beyond the Sixth International Geographical Congress held in London in 1895 to locate the origins of the late-nineteenth-century renewal of interest in the region. Moreover, these scholars pay near-exclusive attention to Resolution 3 of that Congress, which marked the exploration of Antarctica as “*the greatest piece of geographical exploration still to be undertaken*.” Far-less often analyzed is the subsequent Berlin Congress of 1899, to which fell the actual coordination of the independent national expeditions proposing to set for the Far South. This paper, then, will examine the Seventh International Geographical Congress held in Berlin in 1899. It suggests that the 1899 Congress set off a period of exploration (1901-1904) in Antarctica motivated more by competition than collaboration. To organize and direct the aims of these Antarctic voyages, delegates at the 1899 Congress formulated a research program structured around a strict demarcation of each nation’s zone of activity. This essay will show how this partitioning of Antarctic space, though oft-recognized by scholars as a scheme indicative of the desire for international collaboration, betrayed the deeper international tensions and imperial priorities that had stained Antarctic deliberations during the years between the London and Berlin Congresses.

Zusammenfassung: Antarktishistoriker schauen selten auf den 1895 in London abgehaltenen Sechsten Internationalen Geographenkongress zurück, um den Ursprung des Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts wieder entstehenden Interesses an dieser Region zu lokalisieren. Darüber hinaus schenken diese Gelehrten fast ausschließlich ihre Aufmerksamkeit Resolution 3 dieses Kongresses, der die Erforschung der Antarktis als „den größten Teil der noch zu unternehmenden geographischen Erforschung“ kennzeichnete. Wesentlich seltener wird der anschließende Berliner Kongress von 1899 analysiert, auf den die tatsächliche Koordinierung unabhängiger nationaler Expeditionen fiel, die beabsichtigten, nach Süden zu gehen. Dieser Artikel will nun den Siebten Internationalen Geographenkongress untersuchen, der 1899 in Berlin stattfand. Er schlägt vor, dass der Kongress 1899 eine Periode der Erforschung (1901-1904) in der Antarktis einleitete, die mehr durch Wettbewerb als Zusammenarbeit motiviert war. Um die Ziele der Antarktisreisen zu organisieren und zu leiten, formulierten die Delegierten 1899 auf dem Kongress ein Forschungsprogramm, das rund um die strikte Trennung des Einsatzgebietes jeder Nation strukturiert war. Dieser Artikel will zeigen, wie diese Aufteilung des antarktischen Raumes, obwohl er von den Wissenschaftlern typischerweise als bezeichnendes Schema für den Wunsch nach internationaler Zusammenarbeit angesehen war, die tieferen internationalen Spannungen und kaiserlichen Prioritäten verriet, welche die Antarktis-Angelegenheiten in den Jahren zwischen den Konferenzen in London und Berlin beeinflussten.

INTRODUCTION

“*I’m just going outside and may be some time.*” Aside from these tragically self-sacrificial words uttered by Captain Lawrence Oates before he thrust himself forever into the vast Antarctic chill, possibly no other passage has been as oft-connected to the Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration (1897-1922) as Resolution 3 of the Sixth International Geographical Congress held in London in 1895. On the motion of Hugh

Robert Mill, librarian of the Royal Geographical Society, the Congress resolved that “*the exploration of the Antarctic Regions is the greatest piece of geographical exploration still to be undertaken ... this work should be undertaken before the close of the century.*” (KELTIE & MILL 1896: 780). More than unanimously affirming the bottom of the earth as a fertile arena for the advancement of scientific knowledge, the geographers participating in the London Congress determined that the work of uncovering this *terra incognita* be carried out through a cooperative international program. In his address titled “Über Südpolarforschung” delivered to the representatives gathered at London’s Imperial Institute, Georg von Neumayer, German scientist, promoter of Antarctic research, and director of the German Maritime Observatory in Hamburg, called for international collaboration in South Polar work (NEUMAYER 1896). Following Neumayer, Clements Markham, English geographer, standing president of the Royal Geographical Society, and passionate advocate of Antarctic exploration, opened discussion on the subject by thanking Neumayer for having previewed “*all the scientific results which will accrue therefrom*” (KELTIE & MILL 1896: 163). Joseph Hooker, British botanist and experienced polar explorer, echoed the conviction of both Neumayer and Markham, expressing his “*hope that this great Congress will be the means of inducing an international cooperation in polar discovery*” (KELTIE & MILL 1896: 163). And so the discussion continued, as delegates speaking on behalf of geographical societies the world over assented to the need for a coordinated Antarctic program. Unlike the partitioning of Africa a decade earlier, international collaboration looked poised to win out over political rivalry in the Far South.

On the whole, the London Congress of 1895 served to further agitate already growing interest in the renewal of Antarctic research. Roused by the international consensus regarding the import of cooperative Antarctic exploration, nations scrambled to draft plans and raise funds for expeditions. Yet, for all the groundwork laid in London in 1895, by the time the Seventh International Geographical Congress opened on 28 September 1899 in Berlin, much work remained if individual expeditions were to coalesce into a truly collaborative endeavor. Though polar protagonists had been quick to draw up proposals, map courses, and secure financial support, in the four-year interim between the two Congresses little had been done in the way of sketching a comprehensive scheme that could synchronize the Antarctic ventures. Sure the propensity for collaboration persisted; but beyond tenuous promises to undertake simultaneous scientific collection and compare notes, national agents and boosters struggled to finally reconcile their Antarctic inten-

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tions. While there existed an especially “*earnest desire among the scientific men of Britain and Germany that there should be some sort of cooperation with regard to the scientific work of the two expeditions, and that these should both sail in 1901, so that the invaluable gain attaching to simultaneous observations may be secured.*” Scottish-Canadian oceanographer John Murray regretted on the eve of the 1899 Berlin meeting that “*nothing has, as yet, been definitely settled*” (MURRAY 1900: 800). Thus, with the turn of the twentieth century fast approaching, the responsibility of orchestrating independent Antarctic expeditions in the vision of Resolution 3 of the London Congress weighed heavily on those participating in the Seventh International Geographical Congress of 1899.

Few Antarctic historians deny that, along with increased scientific interest in the continent and the development of more-capable technology, “*the most compelling cause for renewed attention [toward Antarctic exploration] was the dangerous expansion of European colonial rivalry*” (PYNE 1986: 85). Even those scholars who see in the Heroic-Era expeditions elements of cooperation concede that political tensions pressurized the decisions made and actions taken during the period (LÜDECKE 2003). That said, though they acknowledge national competition as a motivating factor, most all of the seminal works of Antarctic history stress the collaborative nature of this first ‘Siege of the South Pole’ (1901-1904). In coming to this conclusion, however, Antarctic historians have given somewhat short shrift to the work of the Seventh International Geographical Congress; their focus has been so fixed on Resolution 3 of the 1895 Congress and the subsequent bravado of the early-twentieth-century Antarctic assault that few have analyzed in any detail the work of the Berlin Congress in 1899 or the context in which that work unfolded (GRIFFITHS 2007, HUNTFORD 1999, LANDIS 2001, MILL 1905, BAUGHMAN 1994).¹

This paper will survey the period and events surrounding the Seventh International Geographical Congress held in Berlin in 1899. The story focuses on the efforts to formulate an Antarctic program and will discuss the realization of this endeavor with particular reference to the then-blistering Anglo-German imperial rivalry. By investigating the impact of this escalating imperial contest on the work of coordinating Antarctic exploration, this paper contends that, though animated by a spirit of international cooperation, the work of the Berlin Congress in synchronizing national expeditions revealed, reinforced, and reinvigorated wider European colonial ambitions. Importantly, however, this does not suggest that one philosophy or the other inspired the design of the first Antarctic program; it does not insist that it must have been either collaboration or competition directing the arrangement devised in Berlin. Instead, this paper accepts that both collaboration and cooperation influenced the inception of the Antarctic program, and it will navigate the ebbing and flowing of those sentiments. This research, then, also tries to uncover how and why the cooperative spirit rampant in London in 1895 had abated so considerably by 1899. In doing this, it means to use the Seventh International Geographical Congress to highlight the degree to which Antarctica had become by the twentieth-century’s turn one more dimension of the European imperialist imagination. Just as the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 ignited the invasion and annexation of the Dark Continent, so did the Berlin Congress of 1899 energize a colonial struggle – of a vastly different variety – on the White Continent.

DRAWING LINES IN ‘THE ICE’

The site of the 1899 Congress had been chosen during the dying hours of the London Congress of 1895. Two invitations had been officially submitted: the National Geographic Society offered up Washington, DC, and the Berlin Geographical Society pushed its namesake. In the end, Berlin prevailed for several reasons: Neumayer reminded delegates that “*the Congress has never before been held in Germany*”; Karl von den Steinen, president of the Berlin Geographical Society, belabored Neumayer’s point, calling attention to the benefits accrued from the “*central position*” of Germany and Berlin; and even polar explorer and representative of the National Geographic Society Adolphus Greely admitted that “*the astonishing growth and development of Berlin is one of the wonders of the age,*” adding that “*to no geographers more than to those of Germany are due the geographical triumphs of the past*” (KELTIE & MILL 1896: 777-778). The responsibility for hosting the 1899 Congress quickly extended beyond Berlin and its geographical society – a testament to the depth and reach of German science. Not only did scientists and academics from around Germany aid in planning the event – a trend illustrative of the high accord the geographical sciences had gained in the country by the late nineteenth century – so too did the ruling powers of the German Empire welcome the opportunity to at once play host to an international gathering while at the same time flex their scientific muscle on a global stage. One commentator who attended the Congress would later recall that the German Empire’s “*serious attitude towards geography was borne in upon one from beginning to end – a result apparently of their persuasion that a knowledge of the earth’s surface, of its riches, its races, its commerce, its needs, and its accessibility, is bound up with their own prosperity and ambitions*” (B.T.C. 1899: 597).

When the organizing committee of the Seventh International Geographical Congress sent out their “*Suggestions Regarding the Work of the Congress*” in January 1899, it remained far from clear that Antarctica would become the keystone of the assembly. While it was “*hoped that a general scheme may be agreed upon for simultaneous and strictly comparable observation,*” the drawing of a plan for Antarctic exploration received no special mention in this draft outline – rather it was inconspicuously tucked away amongst the general mass of proposed scientific papers, expedition reports, and travel accounts (ANONYMOUS 1899a: 227, ANONYMOUS 1899b). Even in the preliminary program printed in July, Antarctic exploration garnered only minimal regard as just one more item on an extensive schedule of geographical discussions (ECSIGC 1899). For all this official woolliness, however, those invited to attend the Berlin Congress anticipated the attention the topic would capture once the delegates crowded the Prussian Chamber of Deputies in late September. “*Antarctic exploration will occupy the most prominent place in the deliberations,*” opined a National Geographic Society editor in August (ANONYMOUS 1899c: 296). And, just as predicted, those who traveled to the assembly left deeply impressed by the gravity of the Antarctic discussion. “*If there was one dominant note in the proceedings,*” remarked one returning delegate, “*it was that of Polar Exploration*” (B.T.C. 1899: 595). “*The departments of Geography which received most attention at the Congress were, perhaps, Antarctic Exploration,*” added another (ANONYMOUS 1899d: 632). Henry G. Bryant of the

Philadelphia Geographical Society reiterated the conviction, noting that *“Unquestionably, the leading question at the congress was the consideration of Antarctic exploration”* (BRYANT 1899-1901: 168).²

The importance accorded Antarctic exploration at the Berlin Congress was in large part due to the immediacy of the issue. The London Congress in 1895 had left wide open the task of both assembling and harmonizing Antarctic expeditions. And while the former had been pursued with impressive enthusiasm, efforts toward the latter had made little headway in the four years following. The lack of progress owes in part to the fact that, rather than planning in concert with one another, each nation had concentrated on securing support and financial assistance for its own Antarctic venture. Not surprisingly, the tone of these fundraising campaigns often stressed national glory over international cooperation. At an Anglo-Australian Antarctic Conference organized in 1897 to coincide with Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the Marquis of Lothian charged that *“the work of Antarctic research should be done by Englishmen ... I know that foreign countries are at this moment striving to inaugurate expeditions in order to discover what we ought to try and do ourselves. I should not like to see foreign names upon that hemisphere where all civilized points are inhabited by our countrymen and belong to this country”* (ANONYMOUS 1897: 385). In a similar vein, at a joint meeting of the Berlin Geographical Society and a division of the German Colonial Society held on 16 January 1899, German physicist and meteorologist Wilhelm von Bezold questioned *“Is Germany to limit herself, as she did in the 1840s, merely to providing the intellectual impulse, while leaving the practical application of these ideas to foreigners? At a time when Germans saw their most sublime ambition as being praised as a nation of poets and thinkers, and allowed themselves in other respects to be pushed into a corner, this was quite acceptable. Now, at the end of the nineteenth century, when we look back at 1870, and at the time when our German heroes showed to an astonished world the extent of courage and daring present in the German people, things have changed. Today it is important to show the flag, to demonstrate Germany's might and power. We cannot allow others to carry out the plans we have formulated, plans which will benefit science and bring honor to the fatherland!”* (BEZOLD 1899: 84-85). Even the few attempts made in the years prior to the Berlin Congress to systematize exploration in the Far South met with failure. For example, a special meeting called by the fellows of the Royal Society of London on 24 February 1898, though well-attended by many prominent Antarctic enthusiasts, including Markham, Neumayer, and famed Norwegian polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen, did little more than affirm each luminaries' particular area of interest in the Antarctic (MURRAY 1897-1898). Thus, the concern over national development combined with the quest for international prestige to overshadow international scientific cooperation in the years preceding the Berlin Congress.

For all this foot-dragging prior to the Congress, when the roughly 1600 representatives convened on 28 September 1899 they wasted little time settling the Antarctic agenda. Addressing the General Assembly on 29 September, Markham proposed a division of the *“unknown region”* into four quadrants based on the traditional areas of British and German research: the Victoria (90° E to 180°) and Ross (180° to 90°

W) sections, predominantly facing the Pacific Ocean, would be the primary field of British activity; the Weddell (90° W to 0°) and Enderby Sections (0° to 90° E), accessed by voyage through the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, were assigned to the Germans.³ Because this portioning of Antarctica agreed with the earlier recommendation of Georg von Neumayer and the German Commission for South Polar Exploration that the continent be divided into two halves, Markham spoke of the scheme as a synergetic one, reassuring the audience of his utmost desire and belief in such *“a plan of cooperation”* (MARKHAM 1901: 623-625).

Though this course of action made every effort to placate the honest scientific desires of those attendees who clung to the notion of peaceful collaboration in Antarctica, it also exposed a deeper motive. On the one hand, it was agreed that the meteorological labor and geophysical chores might be done in a coordinated fashion according to the standards of the First International Polar Year (1882-1883). On the other, this division of Antarctica made clear that the grander work of each national expedition was to remain autonomous. In this way, the dedication to international scientific cooperation many scholars have found in the demarcation of Antarctic space could be more properly considered the splitting up of territory so that each nation's activities – and any potential successes – would not overlap. Such a parceling implies not so much collaboration as arranged avoidance: by heading to different regions, the sensational accomplishments of one nation would not be muddled with those of another.

Furthermore, this scheme handed to the British expedition the Victoria Quadrant – a region Markham had himself admitted offered the best opportunity for setting overland journeys to the magnetic and South poles – and passed to the Germans the unexplored coastline of the Enderby Quadrant – a sector ideal for both showcasing German naval proficiency and affirming German scientific prowess (MARKHAM 1899: 475-478). It follows that this proposal, more than simply an attempt to coordinate Antarctic programs, was beholden to wider imperial traditions: for the British, discovery and geographical “firsts” bestowed international prestige and might; for the Germans, naval expertise and precise scientific collection did the same. Therefore, just as the British hoped that lugging equipment and supplies toward the Pole without the help of dogs might somehow prove their manliness thereby legitimizing their right to empire, Germans acknowledged that *“At the moment when Germany is willing to shape its naval power, which was not anticipated years ago, an expansion of naval knowledge at a place where it is mostly missing would be a national achievement worthy of its price”* (MARKHAM 1901: 625, OBERHUMMER 1898: 33).⁴

Of course, beyond the nationalistic responsibilities attached to each Antarctic endeavor, more practical colonial interests – exploiting natural resources and claiming new territory – found renewed vigor in the proposed reconnaissance of the last of the world's unexplored reaches. To be sure, the division of Antarctica was hardly the first attempt to formalize the spheres of influence of the British and German empires. In the wake of the German Reich's colonial expansion under Wilhelm II – by the 1890s Germany had become a threat to the British Empire's naval dominance thanks in part to the Kaiser's insistence that Germany's ‘future lies upon the water’ – the

two empires had etched through a series of treaties the boundaries separating the domains over which each held power (GAUSS 1915, LÜDECKE 1992). These myriad agreements, much like the carving of Antarctica, helped to define the territorial, economic, and cultural interests of the two competing empires.⁵

Additionally, by the end of the nineteenth century, just as the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans held considerable priority for the British Empire, the Indian Ocean arena had become important to the German Empire (FERGUSON 2002: 202). Not only had German trade, by the 1880s, gained a firm footing on the island of Zanzibar off the coast of Tanganyika (now Tanzania), but in 1885 the German state extended its formal influence over the region by establishing the colony of German East Africa. Over the course of the next decade, concerned about the near-constant dissolution of European protectorates in Africa and the subsequent redistribution of those colonies, the German Empire moved “to consolidate an area in Central Africa that would stretch from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean” (FEUCHTWANGER 2001: 171). Control over this swath of Africa, it was believed, would provide Germany greater influence across the Indian Ocean region. The German Empire further expressed its interest in the Indian Ocean arena in 1898 by laying the foundations for a rail line connecting Berlin with the Persian Gulf. While fundamentally a venture of German economic expansion aimed at extending the German industrial influence across Eastern Europe into the Middle East, the railway also intended to connect the German capital with a planned naval base in the Persian Gulf. And prior to sending a German national expedition to the Antarctic, the German Deep Sea Expedition set for the Southern Indian Ocean in 1898. Tellingly, this German scientific expedition, headed by prominent zoologist Professor Carl Chun, “induced the Imperial German Government to supply funds” (MILL 1905: 403). In supporting this and other scientific ventures, “the German government had made a grant of 15,000 £ (300,000 German marks) for oceanic research, especially in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans” in the spring of 1898 alone (ANONYMOUS 1898: 85). The increasing importance of the Indian Ocean region to the German imperial strategy was not lost on the eventual leader of the German South Polar Expedition (1901-1903), thirty-four-year-old geography professor and veteran Arctic explorer Erich von Drygalski. Upon returning to South Africa after wintering in the Antarctic, Drygalski commented that “The extent of our overseas concerns was also apparent in Cape Town, where we had the pleasure of going aboard one of the two new Imperial Mail Steamships of the German-East African Line” (DRYGALSKI 1989: 324).

Within this context, it is no surprise that by April 1899 – a full five months prior to the division of Antarctica done at the Berlin Congress – the German Commission for South Polar Exploration chaired by Neumayer had pinpointed both the German settlement at Cape Town, South Africa, and the Kerguelen Islands as suitable sites for erecting stations to assist a German South Polar Expedition sent to investigate the southern Indian-Atlantic Ocean (DRYGALSKI 1989: 10). Any German voyage to the Southern Continent, it seemed, would go through the Indian Ocean, thereby solidifying Germany’s interest in the region and creating for the German Empire its own ‘Place in the Sun’ (GAUSS 1915: 181-182). Deputy Gröber of the German Center Party conflated Antarctic explo-

ration with the expansion of the German Empire into the Indian Ocean arena. “Our overseas interests are increasing from year to year in context with the development of our navy and our protectorates,” insisted Gröber. “The question of dispatching a South Polar expedition has now become a matter of national honor” (cited in OBERHUMMER 1900: 112). Given these circumstances, the partitioning of Antarctica done at the Seventh International Geographical Congress can be likened as an extension of the Scramble for Africa and understood as a snapshot of British and German colonial energies; it was another stratagem in the ongoing imperial rivalry between the two powers, another attempt to mark off each state’s region of interest by defining the area over which they held authority (PAKENHAM 1992).

INTERNATIONAL RIVALRY AND THE DIVISION OF ANTARCTICA

Beyond the Anglo-German imperial rivalry – or perhaps because of it – the Antarctic division incited considerable discontent at the Berlin Congress. Respected Scottish-Canadian oceanographer and marine biologist John Murray disagreed with the proposal altogether, maintaining that before any sort of overland exploration, detailed oceanographic research should be undertaken. Such an effort, believed Murray, would not only reveal the most opportune location for heading to the interior of the continent, but, more importantly, would result in the accumulation of scientific knowledge (KOLLM 1901: 84-85). The portioning of the continent challenged other delegates with a stake in Antarctic exploration. Just weeks prior to the Berlin Congress, Polish geographer and meteorologist Henryk Arctowski – who had himself recently returned from Antarctic waters – had laid out his perceived ‘Problem of Antarctic Research’ at the Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. After detailing the extreme conditions and dangers explorers would certainly encounter on multi-year Antarctic ventures, Arctowski resolved that Antarctic exploration be conducted as follows: “1) A system of fixed stations [be] arranged between the edge of the continents and the zone of ice ...; 2) During the same year, two polar expeditions should set out on opposite sides towards the South Pole ...; and 3) A circumpolar expedition [be] planned to follow the edge of the pack right round” (ARCTOWSKI 1900: 803). Though Arctowski realized that “such a system of exploration must necessarily be the work of several nations,” he refrained from any formal orchestration of the work (Arctowski 1900: 803). Instead, he suggested only that Antarctic exploration be conducted systematically and that it be based on international cooperation. At the London Congress in 1895 both Markham and Neumayer had subscribed to similar mentalities. Just as Neumayer emphasized cooperation in his aforementioned speech ‘Über Südpolarforschung’, in his address to the Sixth International Geographical Congress in London, Markham had promoted scientific research as a truly international project. “Each group,” thundered Markham, “I will not say country, for science has no country” (MARKHAM 1896: 8). By 1899, however, this transnational outlook – at least in regards to Antarctic exploration – had eroded. No longer did either advocate a scientific program through which countries collaborated freely, sharing equally the spoils of scientific research, but rather each envisioned an Antarctic program through which nations were attributed that work which was accom-

plished by them.

What had caused such a decisive change in outlook across the four years between the London and Berlin Congresses? I would suggest that the attention paid to national implications in writing up the scheme presented at the Berlin Congress was deeply influenced by escalating political tensions. In short, what was different in 1899 was the Antarctic's entanglement in a new situation – colonial rivalry. European nations had long squabbled over territory and resources – such considerations even had a role in stimulating the renewal of Antarctic exploration in the early 1890s. However, in the years following 1895, as expedition plans began to finally take form, so too did the wider priorities of expansion, national power, and international competition come to weigh heavily on the Antarctic situation. Quite bluntly, the promise of cooperation was superb in the abstract; but when called to pen a collaborative program, the competitive persuasion encouraged by the European imperialist mentality proved insurmountable. As British geographer Hugh Robert Mill fired in 1898, *“It is the duty of the human race to lift that [Antarctic] veil ... and the British people ... ought to take the lead ... because our territory in Australasia, Africa, and the Falkland Islands comes nearest to the unknown region; because our national welfare is more concerned than any other in the intelligent and safe navigation of the Southern Ocean”* (MILL 1898: 415). Germans certainly added their own fuel to this evolving Antarctic animosity. An article in the *‘Kölnische Zeitung’* read, *“For naval supremacy are necessary not only men-of-war and a merchant marine, but also an active participation in those scientific undertakings which lead to man's conquest of the sea ... Therefore let us hope that the German Antarctic expedition will not only add great honor to our scientists, but also bring new glory to German valor at sea”* (cited in GROSVENOR 1899: 319). Further evidence of this intersection between the quest for national development and the rising geopolitical importance of the Antarctic are the words of a German commentator reflecting on the organization of the German South Polar Expedition: *“It was high time that Germany too should become actively involved, unless she were once again prepared to stand humbly by, leaving the glory to other nations”* (BASCHIN 1901: 169). This brand of patriotic hyperbole colored the Antarctic scheme presented in Berlin in 1899.

In addition to the specter of international competition hanging over the Berlin Congress, even more mundane disputes undermined the envisaged atmosphere of collaboration. For one, the American author Edwin Balch repeatedly expressed his disgust over the names assigned to the four Antarctic quadrants. Whereas Markham labeled the sections after the Queen and three prominent British explorers, Balch believed that the rights of discovery, and hence naming, for the Victoria Quadrant belonged to American Navy Commodore and Antarctic explorer Charles Wilkes. *“If the division into quadrants should be agreed upon,”* wrote Balch, suggesting implicitly that he was not entirely behind the scheme, *“this one should be termed Wilkes Quadrant”* (BALCH 1900: 357, BALCH 1903, BALCH 1905).

Perhaps even more indicative of the shriveling collaborative spirit were reviews of the Berlin Congress that appeared in British publications. Several British visitors lamented that the overall atmosphere of the proceedings had been decidedly less

international than expected. The popular scientific journal *‘Nature’* conveyed disgust over the decision made by the hosts of the assembly – the Berlin Geographical Society – to print the *“supplementary programme of entertainments in German only”* (ANONYMOUS 1899d: 632). Though four languages were officially allowed – and substantial contributions were made in the English, French, German, and Italian – *‘Nature’* further complained that *“German also was the one language used in the general business, all announcements were made in German only, almost all the notices exhibited were in German and sometimes even in the German script, which can scarcely be looked on as an international character. In London the three languages were used for every written or printed notice and every important verbal announcement ... The foreigner, unversed in the German language and unused to German customs, was somewhat at a disadvantage throughout.”* (ANONYMOUS 1899d: 632). The *‘Geographical Journal’*, press outlet of the Royal Geographical Society, expressed similar chagrin, noting that *“The gathering was in fact less representatively international [than the London Congress] ... The total membership was about 1600. Amongst those present there were about 205 foreigners ... There were about 500 foreigners at the London Congress”* (ANONYMOUS 1899e: 538). These petty disputes serve to magnify a larger phenomenon: the cooperative impulse behind Antarctic exploration at the London Congress in 1895 had, by 1899, dissolved into something of a competitive passion.

CONCLUSION

The participants at the Berlin Congress, more than divvying up Antarctic territory, did complete plans for undertaking joint scientific research. The Congress resolved to form a committee in order to *“determine the scope and methods of magnetic and meteorological observations to be made by the expeditions sent out, and to organize simultaneous and inter-communicated observations at points outside of the Antarctic region”* (ANONYMOUS 1899f: 491). The distribution of sample scientific observation forms as well as the compilation of an *‘Antarctic Manual’* aided the carrying out of coordinated research (MURRAY 1901). Finally, a series of magnetic stations were established ringing Antarctica; these were manned by a host of international crews – including some non-European members – and in most cases worked in concert with one another. Thus, international collaboration was certainly far from a simple veneer.

Still, the rhetoric of contest and conflict often even tinged calls for collaboration. Speaking to the need for raising a British national expedition, Markham stressed: *“We have been invited to co-operate with the German expedition, and we cannot hold back. England has held the front rank in maritime discovery for three centuries, and her place must be maintained by her sons ... Other nations have sent out expeditions with which we should be in friendly rivalry – in co-operation”* (MOWATT 1899: 195-196). Lord Kelvin, President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh made a similar allusion. *“The primary object of Antarctic exploration in the present day is to explore the southern boundary, the Antarctic boundary of navigable waters,”* he began. *“Germany, Belgium, and England have joined in this object. Surely as Britannia rules the waves, it is of primary importance for England to take part in the exploration of her own realm”* (MOWATT 1899: 196). Writing on the

German South Polar Expedition, Scottish oceanographer and polar explorer William Bruce indicated: *“rivalry there will be; but it will consist in the endeavor of each Expedition to obtain the best possible scientific results”* (BRUCE 1901: 466).

The eventual realization of early-twentieth-century national expeditions helps to further reveal the strong competitive thrust driving the formulation of the Antarctic program. For example, in the German case, the outfitting of the venture became itself a matter of national honor. Nearly all of the scientific instruments, the photographic accessories, and the sporting equipment, including snowshoes, skis, and sleds, were obtained from German suppliers. As Drygalski later surmised, *“We were able to supply ourselves almost exclusively with instruments made in Germany, and had an opportunity to admire the high standards attained in these areas that have been achieved here at home”* (DRYGALSKI 1989: 13). Neumayer himself acknowledged the Antarctic task as a national one, appealing to the German nation for funds and *“to German patriotism not to neglect the present opportunity of leading the way in exploring so vast a region of the unknown”* (MILL 1897: 649). *“The plan that governs this German expedition,”* started the distinguished German geographer and president of the Berlin Geographical Society Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen at the christening of the German expedition’s vessel “Gauss” in April 1901, *“is bolder and more comprehensive”* than that of any other nation (cited in MURPHY 2002: 74). And the final scientific plan of the German venture, drafted and delivered by Drygalski in the spring of 1901, held to the *“overall consensus that the expedition was to add to the naval prestige of the German Reich”* (LÜDECKE 2003: 40).

Concerning the many achievements of the Antarctic expeditions, the reaction of the public speaks volumes. Framed as they were by rivalry, the British expedition’s entrapment at a point farther south than that of the Germans (76°30’ S compared to 66°02’ S) along with the British expedition’s attainment of a then-record high latitude (82°17’ S) very much disappointed the German people. *“The abundant wealth of scientific material cannot hide the fact that the expedition has not completed the result that one might have wished for in the interests of the progress of South Polar exploration,”* read one criticism. *“In the case of the English expedition to Victoria Land, it was quite different! Toward the solution of the interesting question of whether a large contiguous land mass exists at the South Pole – an Antarctic continent – the German expedition has contributed little”* (ANONYMOUS 1904: 92). The degree to which rivalry had superseded cooperation in framing the Antarctic program is, perhaps, nowhere more evident than in the publication of the scientific findings of the voyages. Seldom were expeditions’ observations compiled in coordination with one another, but rather the gathered results were released independently – though the volumes were printed and distributed across the Western world. Nor did these scientific manuscripts complement one another. As one reviewer put it, *“Unfortunately the system of combining the results did not work so well as was expected; and from various causes the [British, German, and Swedish] expeditions went their several ways in discussing and publishing their reports”* (MILL 1932: 506).

All of this illustrates that the work of the Seventh International

Geographical Congress in Berlin was deeply influenced by a broader mood of international competition. Though participants at the London Congress in 1895 had went away invigorated by their laying out of a new model through which to direct and commence geographical discovery – one motivated by cooperation rather than rivalry – by 1899 that model had been battered by the force of European imperial ambition. To be sure, without the collaborative ire raised by the London Congress, Antarctic research may never have experienced such a profound renewal. Yet, if the promise of collaboration had induced the initial excitement for the Antarctic endeavor, it was the reality of national rivalry that energized the research program, public support, state backing, and overall urgency for setting south. It was, quite possibly, this competitive motor that both drove Antarctic exploration to fruition while at the same time ate away at the collaborative program envisioned by the London Congress in 1895. In the end it took both philosophies – collaboration and competition – to send the first wave of heroes south. As one philosophy waned, the other waxed; as the collaborative furor died away in the wake of the Sixth International Geographical Congress, a competitive desire rose up in its place by the opening of the Seventh. Just as Drygalski later wrote of his own motivation for polar work, the Antarctic program drafted at the Berlin Congress was indicative of the *“conviction of national duty within an international enterprise”* (DRYGALSKI 1989: 7).

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ENDNOTES

¹ I do not mean to suggest that historians have completely ignored the 1899 Congress. However a quick sample illustrates my point: Stephen Pyne’s ‘The Ice’ mentions only that the Berlin Congress *“proclaimed 1901 as ‘Antarctica Year’”* (PYNE 1986: 86); Tom Griffiths’ ‘Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica’ imitates Pyne’s scant coverage; Roland Huntford’s controversial classic ‘Scott and Amundsen’ ignores the actual work of the Congress all together, focusing instead on Clements Markham’s bias against the use of dogs for sledging; and, finally, while Hugh Robert Mill’s ‘The Siege of the South Pole’ as well as Marilyn Landis’ broadly-realized survey of exploration ‘Antarctica: Exploring the Extreme’ both chronicle the renewal of interest in Antarctic exploration in the late nineteenth century, neither gives any substantial mention of the Seventh International Geographical Congress of 1899. Even T.H. Baughman’s ‘Before the Heroes Came’, a work that sets out to study *“the events that led to a renewal of interest in the Antarctic in the late nineteenth century,”* spends astonishingly little time on the Seventh International Geographical Congress – the index contains no reference to the Congress (BAUGHMAN 1994: x).

² In addition to the Antarctic discussion, the Congress boasted an extensive polar program, including acclaimed Norwegian

polar explorer and scientist Fridtjof Nansen. Nansen's well-attended lecture detailed the results of his Fram expedition, which had recently returned from a failed attempt to reach the North Pole. In a broader sense, the scientific role and impact of the Congress was extensive. Attendees resolved to establish a uniform system of measures to be used in geographical research and publication; to refine and clarify the process of tabulating population; to normalize oceanographic nomenclature; to produce a 1:1,000,000 scale world map; and much more.

- 3 Markham's personal character and obsession with Antarctic exploration have been widely discussed. Though many scholars have been quick to cite Markham's fervent desire to "control Antarctic exploration" as explanation of the narrowness of his scheme, this article – while acknowledging his controversial status – strays from such psychological analysis (HUNTFORD 1979: 128, MARKHAM 1986).
- 4 Markham also praised the British expedition under the command of James Ross as the only true Antarctic predecessor, insisting that it was the only "properly equipped Antarctic expedition. Other exploring and whaling vessels have crossed the Antarctic circle, and have gone as far as the ice allowed, or as their business seemed to require; but the ships of Sir James Ross were the only ones that were prepared for navigation in the ice, and the only ones that have penetrated through the polar pack into the true Antarctic region" (MARKHAM 1901: 623). Such an assertion is another telling example of the political tension shaping the nature of Antarctic exploration.
- 5 Concerned primarily with the distribution of African territory, agreements over boundaries and spheres of influence were made between Britain and Germany in 1885, 1886, 1890, 1893, and 1898. The Kaiser's belief that a world-empire went hand in hand with naval supremacy was often expressed in public addresses such as his September 1898 speech delivered in Stettin entitled 'Our Future Lies upon the Water.' This sentiment is repeated in his October 1899 address in Hamburg entitled 'Bitterly we need a Powerful German Fleet': "Now our Fatherland has been newly united through Emperor William the Great and is in a position to take up its glorious outward development. And right here in this great emporium of trade we feel the sense of power and energy, which the German people are capable of putting into their enterprises through the fact that they are bound together and united. But here, too, we can most readily understand how necessary it is that we should have powerful support and that we can no longer continue without increasing our fighting strength upon the seas" (GAUSS 1915: 126-27 and 150-54).

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