

**March 3, 1956**

**Excerpt from Papers Prepared by the Historical  
Division on Antarctica**

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**Summary:**

Antarctica is a strategic location with abundant natural resources and thirty countries are involved in research there.

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...But the problem of Antarctica, however hazy, is no longer a remote one. Apart from hopes of mineral wealth, whaling, resources yield an annual income of nearly £25 million. The area is also of importance for meteorological investigation, and there are already 18 weather stations located there. It may also prove useful as a testing ground for nuclear weapons and for the location of air and submarine bases. This explains to some extent the intense activity on the part of thirty countries, ostensibly in connection with the International Geophysical Year of 1957-1958. While the year was chosen by the International Council of Scientific Unions because sunspots are expected then to be large and to occur frequently, and there is need for scientific study of low latitude phenomena, the present interest in the Antarctic may not be wholly technical. The expeditions now in the region are accomplishing at least as much from the operational as from the geophysical viewpoint, and on 13 February 1956 the Russian flag was hoisted over the base in Queen Mary Land, claimed by Australia.