

New Book Refutes Russian Claims to Special Status in Antarctica

Oxford historian dismisses the claim that Russia discovered Antarctica, and warns that Russia may use that claim to demand special rights in the region.

OXFORD, ENGLAND, UNITED KINGDOM, July 16, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In his new [book](#) Oxford-based Antarctic historian Rip Bulkeley presents detailed arguments in rebuttal of Russian claims in respect of Antarctica. He argues that the historical claim, first put forward in 1949, that a Russian naval expedition were the first to sight the mainland coast on 28 January 1820, is not supported by the surviving evidence, and that over the years a variety of falsifications and fallacies have been used to make it stick. A lesser related claim, that key Antarctic place [names](#) were first bestowed by that expedition, was first put forward in 1958 on totally fallacious grounds. Both historical claims have recently been endorsed by President [Putin](#). Ever since 1949 Soviet and Russian leaders have argued that first discovery entitles their country to special rights in respect of the Antarctic continent.

After 72 years of misrepresentation of Antarctic history, according to Bulkeley, Russian public opinion is now confused and ill informed. The belief that Russians discovered Antarctica is widely shared, because it forms part of the national school syllabus. However it amounts to little more than "loyalty to a historical myth which has regrettably acquired the status of fact". In the context of climate change however, and with the central pillar of the Antarctic Treaty System, the Protocol on Environmental Protection, due for revision in 2048, such beliefs and the claim to special status in Antarctica, all of which form part of Russian Antarctic policy today, may shortly give rise to international conflict in the Antarctic to match the problems which observers have already been reporting from the Arctic.

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