

BYRD'S LITTLE AMERICA

[Review by H. G. R. King* of Paul A. Carter's *Little America; town at the end of the world*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1979, xii, 301 p, illus, US\$ 19.95.]

Little America is the author's personal tribute to the 50th anniversary of the first flight to the South Pole on 29 November 1929, and to the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Antarctic Treaty on 1 December 1959. The 30 years separating these events witnessed the return of the United States to Antarctica for the first time since Lt Charles Wilkes' exploring expedition of 1838–42. During these 30 years, the Antarctic scene was dominated by one man—Admiral Richard Evelyn Byrd, leader of five scientific expeditions based at Little America, a station established on the Ross Ice Shelf, near the Bay of Whales and the site of Amundsen's historic Framheim. Byrd was not only first to fly over the South Pole, but was responsible for the discovery and scientific investigation of Marie Byrd Land, establishing it as a distinctly American sphere of influence, though the US Government never made a formal claim.

Mr Carter's book is a non-academic history of these years with an emphasis on the human side. He has made good use of the unique collection of diaries and papers relating to the Byrd expeditions in the Center for Polar Archives, Washington, DC, a collection which, incidentally, still awaits Admiral Byrd's own archives. Mr Carter has, in particular, benefited from the cooperation of Professor Laurence McKinley Gould, second-in-command and chief scientist on the first Byrd expedition. Using this collection and other original material the author traces the history of five Little Americas which Byrd established on his expeditions. The result is a well-produced and illustrated book which gives us interesting glimpses of personalities who, in later years, were to achieve pre-eminence in the polar world—Larry Gould himself; Paul Siple, the young boy scout who in 1956–57 was to be commander at Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station; Martin Ronne (a former Amundsen man) and his son Finn; Bernt Balchen who, with Byrd, named the first Little America, and who, during the war, helped sustain the resistance movement in Norway; and many others. We are also reminded of Byrd's singular contribution to the modernization of exploration techniques—the use of aircraft for reconnaissance and supply, the deployment of powerful motor transport and the introduction to Antarctica of radio communication. Byrd was probably the first explorer to learn how to handle the media, taking professional journalists into the field and broadcasting regularly from Antarctica to listeners at home. Byrd expeditions were seldom out of the news. He lived long enough to preside over the establishment of the International Geophysical Year bases, and the last of the Little America stations, as leader of Operation Deep Freeze I in 1955–56. From then on the US was to be established permanently in Antarctica 'with a legitimate long-term interest'. From here it was but a short step to the negotiation of the Antarctic Treaty whose regime, to quote Mr Carter's hopefully prophetic words 'could serve as the pilot model for a more comprehensive world social order'.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF FINN RONNE

[Review by Sir Vivian Fuchs* of Captain Finn Ronne's *Antarctica, my destiny*. New York, Hastings House Inc, 1979, ix, 278 p, illus. Hardcover US\$ 12.95.]

Son of Martin Ronne who accompanied Amundsen to both polar regions, Finn Ronne was determined to follow in his father's footsteps. His chance came in 1933–35, when he went with Admiral Richard Byrd to Little America as dog handler. From 1939 to 1941, he served under Richard Black of the US Antarctic Service Expedition at East Base on Stonington Island. In 1947–48 he led his own private expedition from the old East Base, and nine years later was in

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