

AV 7: Andrei Kapitsa oral history summary

Recorded at Andrei Kapitsa's home, 173 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, 19 June 1998.

[01.31.42] [00.00.50] Description of Andrei Kapitsa's connection to Cambridge. Andrei Kapitsa [AK] was born in this house in 1931; his father was working with Rutherford at the Cavendish Laboratory; he returned to Russia when he was 4. AK next returned to Cambridge in 1964 to lecture on Russian Antarctic expeditions. [00.03.21] Description of Kapitsa's family history. He is from an old Russian family with strong scientific connections. Mention of his grandfather Aleksey Nikolaevich Krylov. [00.10.18] Description of his academic career at Moscow University, 1948-1965, where he became Dean of Faculty aged 33; AK studied Geomorphology and glaciology in Antarctica then the African rift valley and Eastern Russia. [00.13.45] Description of his interest in Geomorphology and benefits of training in a wide range of disciplines. Comments on Russian education. [00.17.00] Description of interest in the Polar Regions. Mention that his father was expelled from work in 1946. [00.19.15] Description of his recruitment to the 1st Soviet Antarctic Expedition by Ivan Papanin in Spring 1955. Mention of the North Pole-1 expedition; AK's respect for Scott and attempts to trace the Russian members of his final expedition. [00.23.35] Description of preparations for the expedition, his responsibilities and training. Story about testing equipment and clothing in an Air force cold room for 3 hours, where he almost froze. The clothing were samples and not insulated, which the team did not realise at the time. [00.29.50] Description of Russian motivations to go to Antarctica, both scientific and political. Mention of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) and the meeting which allocated the Eastern area of Antarctica to Russia. [00.33.15] Description of arriving in Antarctica after 40 days at sea via Cape Town; AK's first time outside Russia; He arrived on the second ship and spend 1.5 years there carrying out glaciological work, December 1955 – March 1957. Mention of flights, Mirny Station and Vostok. [00.38.00] Description of early research on sub-glacial lakes and his work on the topic during the expedition which formed the basis of his thesis. [00.40.35] Description of meeting the Australian IGY expedition. Mention of friendly relationship with Philip Law and those on board the Kista Dan despite poor diplomatic relations between Australia and Russia. [00.42.32] Description of AK's second season in Antarctica where he visited the South pole, 1958-1960, with the 4th Soviet Antarctic expedition. Mention of specially developed vehicles called Kharkovchankas; celebration at the pole with the Americans. [00.45.30] Description of flying to Antarctica from Russia via the Pacific for his third expedition. Stories about the Americans cutting contact on the flight from New Zealand to McMurdo base; learning specific English phrases to communicate whilst flying to Antarctica. [00.50.21] Description of Soviet activity in Antarctica being purely scientific and civilian in nature. Mention of American meteorologist Cartwright who came to visit on second expedition. [00.52.18] Description of last visit to Antarctica, 1963-64, where he was part of the traverse party who travelled from Mirny - Vostok - the Pole of Inaccessibility - Queen Maud land – Molodezhaia covering 6,000km. [00.53.00] Description of geophysical expeditions to study the East African Rift Valley, 1967-1969. [00.55.14] AK has visited 80 countries over all the continents except south America. [00.55.30] After Africa in 1970 AK became head of the Far East centre of the Russian Academy of science in Vladivostok. Where he lived with his family for 7 years establishing the Institute of Geography [00.57.20] Description of travel to Chukotka; anecdote about the tundra; challenges of establishing the Institute in difficult bureaucratic circumstances; two heart attacks forced his retirement and return to Moscow in 1977. [00.59.40] Description of Arctic research; student trips to the Ural Mountains and remote Kola peninsula, 1951. [01.01.31] Description of his association with the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI). Brief mention of meeting Gordon Robin, Terence Armstrong and Charles Swithinbank, 1964; Joint project in the 1990's with Gareth Reece in the Kola

peninsula and other areas using satellite data to study environmental change and pollution. [01.04.22] Description of Norilsk and difficulties associated with living in the North. Mention of indigenous populations. [01.07.24] Description of current state of scientific work in Russia. [01.08.33] Mention of daughter being a Geographer until recently when her funding run out. [01.09.10] Brief mention of wish to return to Antarctica as a tourist if his health allows and reflections on his career. [01.11.15] Description of Vostok Station being used as a nuclear blast detection centre. AK became aware of this when it was closed for a year in 1962 and he was under pressure to open it again in 1963; mention that the Americans used Thule for the same purpose. [01.13.12] Description of Otto Schmidt and other Russian explorers and pilots: Papanin, Krenkel', Fiodorov, Shirshov, Treshnikov, Somov Tolstikov, Vodop'ianov, Cherevichniy, Mazruk he has met. [01.17.50 Silent shots followed by shots of questions] [01.24.05 shots of the garden and house] [01.26.05 shots of black and white family photographs with conversation in background] [01.30.10 shot of AK walking in and out of the front door].