

# Lindblad Explorer runs aground

Two Antarctic cruises by the Swedish cruise ship Lindblad Explorer, one to the Antarctic Peninsula area, and one to the Ross Dependency, were abandoned last season after the ship ran aground off Wiencke Island in Gerlache Strait on December 24. The Lindblad Explorer's double hull was punctured in eight places, causing flooding in the engine-room, when she struck hidden rocks off Cape Astrup at 64deg 43.5min S/63 deg 08.5min W.

Passengers and most of the crew were transferred in the ship's lifeboats to the Chilean Navy's transport and research vessel Piloto Pardo, which reached the Lindblad Explorer in the early hours of December 25. They were taken later to Puerto Williams and were flown to Santiago on December 30. A skeleton crew remained aboard the damaged ship, and the Piloto Pardo stood by until the arrival of the Soviet tug Uragan which came to the Lindblad Explorer's assistance.

Although the Lindblad Explorer had a 2-degree list of starboard, she had the partial use of her engines after the flooding of the engine-room had been controlled. The Uragan pulled her free on December 27, and she was towed first to a sheltered bay in Bransfield Strait for preliminary repairs. Later she was towed to Admiralty Bay, King George Island, South Shetlands. A survey of the damage revealed that the ship would have to be taken to a Chilean or Japanese port for repairs.

Before the 2346-tonne Lindblad Explorer ran aground she was on a voyage under charter to Kanokawa Films, a Japanese company which used her as a floating hotel for the camera crew and cast of a science fiction film called "Virus". She carried 70 passengers, among them the American actors Glenn Ford, George Kennedy, and Chuck Connors, and a crew of 55.

Co-operation in the filming of "Virus" was given by the Piloto Pardo

and the 35-year-old Chilean Navy submarine Simpson, originally the U.S.S. Spot. The 1816-tonne submarine, which carries a crew of 80, was commissioned in 1944, transferred to Chile in 1961, paid off in 1975, and returned to service in 1977 after a refit. She is probably the first submarine to operate in Antarctic waters since the Sennet entered the Ross Sea with the United States Navy's "Operation Highjump" expedition in 1946-47.

## FILM STARS

Men at the United States Palmer Station on Anvers Island were the first to learn of film stars in their neighbourhood. Two Jetranger helicopters from the Piloto Pardo arrived on December 8 with several ship's officers and a cameraman from the Japanese film crew. The Piloto Pardo, the Simpson, and the Lindblad Explorer were all invited to visit the station.

About midnight the submarine and the research ship came alongside the wharf in Arthur Harbour. They took on 25,000 gallons of fresh water from the station pond, and then 185 officers and men settled down to enjoy their brief visit. Station staff were invited aboard both ships for banquets and festivities, and were also given rides in the Pilot Pardo's helicopters. Although the Lindblad Explorer did not call, Chuck Connors flew over the station and waved to his fellow-countrymen.

On her way back to Ushaia, Tierra del Fuego, where she was due on December 30, the Lindblad Explorer passed by Wiencke Island, which lies between Anvers Island and the west coast of the Antarctic Peninsula. She was off Cape Astrup at the north-eastern end of the island when she ran aground. A sunken rock with less than 1.8m of water over it lies about 402m north of the cape.

First to reach the Lindblad Explorer after her distress calls were received at Palmer Station on Christmas Eve was the Piloto Pardo. Three other ships were also asked to assist. They were the Norwegian research ship Polarsirkel on her way to the Weddell Sea with the West German base survey expedition, the Soviet freighter Gueizer in the Punta Arenas area, and the Soviet tug Uragan.

#### BAD WEATHER

When the Piloto Pardo reached the Lindblad Explorer early on the morning of December 25 she took aboard the 70 passengers and 34 of the crew. They were transferred by the cruise ship's lifeboats in less than 15 minutes. Captain Lars Erik Granquist and 21 of his crew remained aboard to await the arrival of the Uragan.

Because of bad weather in the area — light snow, poor visibility, and 18 of 25-knot winds — the Uragan had to heave to in Dallmann Bay north of the Melchior Islands. She did not rendezvous with the Piloto Pardo until late on the evening of December 26. The next day the Uragan pulled the cruise ship off the rocks with the aid of the Piloto Pardo, which then sailed for Puerto Williams.

This was the second time the Lindblad Explorer had run aground off the west coast of the Antarctic Peninsula. She was caught in a 60-knot gale on February 11, 1972, and ran aground in Admiralty Bay, King George Island.

The Piloto Pardo which responded to a radio call for help took 104 passengers and 40 of the crew to Punta Arenas.

Four attempts to refloat the Lindblad Explorer were made by Chilean and Argentinean Navy tugs, but each failed.

The Chilean tug *Yelcho*, which had also responded to the call for help, sailed for Punta Arenas on February 15 with the *Piloto Pardo*. Captain Bjarne Aas and seven men remained aboard the Lindblad Explorer to await the arrival of a West German tug from South Africa which towed her to Buenos Aires.

In January and February this year the Lindblad Explorer was to have made two tourist cruises, the first from Ushaia to the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) and bases in the Antarctic Peninsula area. The second was to have continued on into the Ross Sea with calls to Cape Royds, Cape Evans, McMurdo Station, Cape Hallett, Cape Adare, Macquarie Island, the Auckland Islands, and Stewart Island, ending at Lyttelton.

Another cruise ship, the *World Discoverer*, operated by a West German travel firm, made two 24-day Antarctic cruises in December and January without accident. She called at Palmer Station on December 11 with 125 tourists, who were shown round the station. Arthur Harbour had other visitors the day before — several killer whales.

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## Master's Death

Captain Ernst Funk, master of the South African research and support ship *Agulhas* died less than a week after the ship's return to Cape Town from Sanae at the end of the 1978-79 season. He joined the support ship *RSA* as chief mate in January, 1964, and took over command in 1975. In January, 1978, he assumed command of the newly-acquired *Agulhas*.

A former naval officer, Captain W. McD. Leith, now commands the *Agulhas*. He was chief mate from the time of her inaugural voyage in January, 1978.

