SOVIET FISHING ACTIVITIES IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC.

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I certify that this subthesis is my own work and that all sources have been acknowledged.

Robert Aynen
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Nonetheless, all responsibility for any errors in this subthesis is mine alone.

Robert Ayson.

For Mongrel.
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INTRODUCTION.

The proposition that the Soviet Union has used its sizeable fishing fleet to pursue more than just creatures of the marine environment is neither new nor, it would seem, alarming. Common reactions to the USSR's fishing activities have tended to render such concerns unimportant or nonsensical. The first result (unimportance) arises when the perceived threat of Soviet fishing is seen by most as at or near zero. The second (nonsensical) occurs when the few see every fishing vessel as a fully fledged intelligence collector cum warship and every crew member as a dedicated naval operative. Somewhere in between these inaccurate portrayals of the strategic applications of Soviet fisheries lies the true story.

This sub-thesis examines Soviet fishing activities in the South Pacific region, with particular reference to New Zealand, Australia, Vanuatu and Kiribati. In the past, commentators have tended to focus solely on the immediate military implications of Soviet fishing access to the region. It is hoped that the following chapters will broaden this perspective. Attention is paid to the longer term, political objectives which explain Soviet fisheries proposals and operations. Each chapter establishes the Soviet record, both in negotiations and at sea, and then discusses the security and wider political implications which follow.
Before the record of the Soviet fishing fleet in the South Pacific is considered, it is necessary to place the developments in this region during the 1970s and 1980s in their proper context. This chapter describes the general objectives pursued by Soviet fishing activities on a global scale, taking as its basis an earlier coverage of the topic by the author. Particular reference is made to the intelligence collection and wartime roles of the fishing fleet. The emphasis then moves to the growing importance of southern hemispheric fisheries to the Soviet Union.

The first and most obvious duty of the Soviet fishing fleet is to provide a much needed source of protein for the considerable Soviet population. The potential is enormous. Soviet fishing operations are based around the world’s largest fleet of approximately 3,600 vessels (for a total of 6.5 million gross registered tonnes), ranging from small, rugged trawlers operating in coastal waters to large, deep-water factory fishing vessels and mother ships.

Even in relation to this legitimate sphere of Soviet fisheries there are hints of a hidden agenda. Davidchik and Mahoney have described claims that seafood supplies one third of the animal protein consumed in the Soviet Union as ‘outside the realm of the possible’. The first explanation for the divergence between the results (in terms of consumable catch) and efforts (in terms of geographical coverage) of the Soviet fishing fleet does not tell the full story. The inefficiencies which have characterized the Soviet fishing effort do account in part for the excessive efforts and huge geographical coverage of the fishing fleet, but they cannot explain why Soviet fishing vessels have entered and remained in areas where fish stocks are known to be poor or nonexistent.

The second explanation, that the fishing fleet serves additional, (non-commercial) aims of the Soviet state has drawn attention to the military applications of Soviet fishing activities. These can be divided into two main areas of effort:
intelligence collection facilitated by Soviet fishing vessel access; and wartime support.

The role of Soviet state interests.

The potential for intelligence collection of a minor, ad hoc sort, lies with any merchant or fishing vessel plying the oceans of the world today. There are also possible wartime roles (eg supplying combat vessels) for non-Soviet fishing fleets. What separates Soviet efforts in this field from those of other states is the organizational structure which is able to control and set demands on the fishing fleet under its de facto jurisdiction.

Like all officially recognized units of Soviet government, Soviet fisheries are subordinate to the state. Fleet Admiral Gorshkov stated in 1976 that; ‘maritime transportation, fishing and scientific research on the sea are part of the Soviet Union’s naval might’. Thus the vast Soviet fishing fleet serves as part of the overall drive for sea power. However, sea power in itself is not the determinant in the last instance. The basic presumption is the overall interest of the state. Solie has provided the following description of this distinctly Clausewitzian frame of reference: ‘In this strategy, the navy is the most important single instrument [of sea power] but commercial shipping, fishing and research are also significant elements wrapped into a joint economic and military principle with the promotion of Soviet state interest as its primary goal’.

This is not to say that the Soviet Ministry of Fisheries is merely a puppet of the military complex with absolutely no control over fishing fleet activities. As Jacobsen writes: ‘The civilian fleets have clearly not been organizationally, structurally integrated with the navy proper. They each have functionally autonomous administrative structures, whose ongoing concerns focus on the attainment of civilian tasks, and on the successful meeting of economic plan quotas and requirements’. Rather, embodied within Soviet fisheries operations at all levels (from the highly
bureaucratized Ministry of Fisheries down to the equipment carried on Soviet fishing vessels) are points of integration for military objectives and for the pursuit of overall Soviet national interests.

From this perspective it becomes all too easy to conclude that any Soviet fishing vessel presence which cannot be justified on commercial grounds, must have compensating military applications of a direct nature. This is not necessarily so. The Soviet Union may enter into a fisheries agreement which makes neither commercial nor military sense. But overall Soviet interests may still be judged as likely to benefit. The latter can range from the establishment of a line of communication with a small state, to longer term calculations of political and or strategic advantage and influence. What is certain, though, is that the supposed irrationality and clumsiness of the Soviet Ministry of Fisheries serves as a convenient screen for the fundamental interests of the Soviet state.

The counter-argument, that in these days of perestroika and openness Soviet fishing vessels are vehicles for purely commercial operations, can be equally fallacious. The record is undeniable (despite continued Soviet claims of innocence). Intelligence collection by Soviet fishing vessels and crews is coordinated by the First Division of the Intelligence Directorate (RU or Razvedyvatel’noye Upravleniye), which is to be found attached to each fleet of the Soviet Navy.

Intelligence and wartime tasks.

Vladimir Lysenko, a former captain of Soviet fishing and merchant vessels has described the intelligence gathering tasks of the fishing fleet as follows: detection of submarine traces by the fishing vessel’s active echo-sounders and the relaying of such data in encoded form to Soviet Naval Intelligence; recording port alterations, ship arrivals, departures and sightings of foreign warships; and the handing over of the remains of military equipment trawled from the sea bottom. He notes that “it was part of our duties to observe the defence systems of Western countries, to test the
possibility of "eavesdropping" on the signals automatically transmitted by underwater orientation buoys, and we were given special assignments to gather hydrological information on inshore sealanes and the entrances to foreign ports. 

While a great deal of Soviet ocean-based intelligence collection is carried out by dedicated AGI (Auxiliary General Intelligence or Korabl Razbedki) vessels, the merchant and fishing fleets have been used extensively for the same purpose. For example, in 1976, no less than three accusations were made by Western governments regarding the involvement of Soviet fishing vessels in intelligence gathering. Moreover, the growing sophistication, size and armament of the AGI fleet in recent years, does not suggest that fishing vessel-based collection has come to an end. Recent concern that Soviet non-naval vessels could spy on the Seventh Fleet if Philesco (Philippine Shipyard and Engineering Corp.) was allowed to service socialist-flag ships at strategically important Subic Bay, forced the plan to be blocked in the Philippine Government. There is no doubting that Soviet fishing vessels (whether in Europe, America or Australasia) are still kept under scrutiny by Western security organizations.

But the intelligence collection efforts of Soviet fisheries do not stop at the designated ports used by Soviet vessels. Land-based Soviet fisheries personnel are also involved. The Soviet Union's Office of Fisheries in the United States provides cover for both the KGB and GRU (Glavnoye Razvedyvatel'noye Upravleniye or the Chief Intelligence Directorate of the Soviet General Staff), as does Morflot, the Soviet Shipping Company. The same can be said for the Singapore Soviet Shipping Company (SOCIAC). This is relevant to negotiations in the late 1980s: Singapore is the current servicing site for vessels proposed to enter New Zealand and/or Australian ports under agreements sought by the Soviet Union (See Ch.2 and Ch.5). In February 1982, Aleksandr Bondarev, a Soviet marine superintendent overseeing repairs to Soviet vessels at a Singapore shipyard, was expelled on charges of espionage.

Human Intelligence and Signals Intelligence missions, though, are not the only military applications of the Soviet Union's fishing fleet and related institutions. Soviet
fishing vessels and crews would certainly have some role in times of war. This would not only include the upgrading of the intelligence collection role (ie collection of information on and detecting Western submarines and other combatants19). It is to be expected that fisheries vessels would disrupt Western attempts to control Soviet vessel activity in important ocean areas and choke points20. They would also engage in the provision of logistics, communication and other support to Soviet naval vessels21. The latter applies particularly to the support ships (tankers,etc) which normally accompany even the smallest scale of Soviet fishing operations. These ‘have in the past provided support to submarines and still do on an emergency basis’22. According to Polmar, ‘the fishing fleet includes a large number of research ships, tankers, and refrigerated fish carriers that could be pressed into naval service in wartime, all controlled through an extensive and centralized communications system’23. This centralized guidance would be effected via KGB and other personnel onboard Soviet fishing vessels24, whose peacetime tasks of "chaplaincy" for the Soviet crew and of keeping an eye on foreign observers onboard could be expanded considerably in crisis or war.

It can be argued with some justification that the combat capabilities of old, delapidated Soviet trawlers are negligible at best and that Soviet fishing crew members are more interested in purchasing American running shoes than in tracking US aircraft carrier groups. But the wartime applications of Soviet fishing operations are still cause for concern in the late 1980s. After the fishing agreement between the (Danish Territory of the) Faroes Islands was renewed recently, one report cited the fears of NATO analysts ‘that the fishing fleet and the Russians supervising the repair work might form a task force which, in a crisis, could take control of the Faroes before NATO could react’25. It would not be hard to envisage this scenario involving the transfer of Soviet Spetsnaz (Spetsial’naya Naznacheniya or Special Purpose) operatives via fisheries auspices and vessels. Each Soviet naval fleet has a brigade sized (700 to 900 men) naval Spetsnaz force which comes under the direction of the
intelligence directorate of the fleet and includes a minisubmarine group amongst other specialities.

In negotiations, the Soviet Union also tends to request access for the national airline, Aeroflot, as part of the overall fisheries package. Aeroflot is involved in a range of clandestine activities which parallel and complement those of the fishing fleet. These range from military intelligence gathering from flights over sensitive areas to the use of Aeroflot aircraft to airlift military supplies and the use of Aeroflot offices overseas as covers for KGB and GRU personnel and operations. A recent defector from the USSR has estimated that half of the Tokyo Aeroflot office staff are involved in intelligence collection. No wonder, then, that the issue of Aeroflot access has been a, if not the, major barrier to a New Zealand agreement with the Soviet Union which would pave the way for a fishing vessel servicing facility in the former country (see Ch.2). That the USSR has even asked for Aeroflot access to tiny Kiribati as one component of a fishing agreement (see Ch.3) is a possible indication of the dubious nature of the airline’s true role.

Economic uncertainty.

But questions over the developments in Soviet fishing do not rest solely upon the record of the fishing fleet in supporting Soviet military aspirations. There is considerable doubt over the viability, let alone necessity, of Soviet fishing activity in many parts of the world. This applies not only to overexploited fisheries in the (traditional) northern waters, but also to portions of the South Pacific covered in the following chapters of this thesis.

Soviet interest in fishing agreements with countries of the South Pacific region has been manifested in two main forms. First, the Soviet Union has sought access to the 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zones of several South Pacific Island States since the mid-late 1970s. Second, there have been a series of Soviet proposals to establish servicing facilities in both Australia and New Zealand for fishing vessels operating in
grounds outside the respective EEZs of these two countries.

There are serious doubts over the commercial rationale for each one of these schemes. With respect to island state fishing access, the almost complete unimportance of the Western Central and Eastern Central Pacific regions to the total Soviet fishing effort brings into question the Soviet Union's motives in seeking agreements with these countries. For while these areas do form an appreciable proportion of world fishing resources (see Table 1.1), Soviet inexpertise in tropical fishing has made ventures by Soviet fishing vessels into the region most unprofitable (in an economic sense).

Nonetheless, Soviet marine scientists have (very usefully) provided optimistic forecasts of the untapped potential in the world's tuna stock, particularly with respect to skipjack tuna in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. While these predictions may also have stimulated the Soviet tuna fishing effort in the South Pacific, the translation from catch potential to performance has not occurred in any sense. As Table 1.2 indicates, Soviet catches of the main tuna species found in the South Pacific over the 1983-86 period were negligible at best.

The foundation for further Soviet access agreements in the South Pacific may appear solid on paper in Soviet marine research academies, but in reality the prospects for profitable catch levels by the Soviet fleet are not good. Unless Sovrybflot is completely immune to these facts, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that there are important non-commercial reasons behind the Soviet Union's drive for fishing agreements with South Pacific Island States.

It might be argued that the Soviet proposals for servicing facilities in Australasia are perfectly sensible given the emphasis on southern hemisphere fisheries by the USSR. There is no doubting that the move to non-traditional (eg South Pacific/Antarctic) fisheries was at least partly stimulated by factors beyond the Soviet Union's control. The nearly universal declarations of 200nm EEZs between the years 1976 and 1981 brought an end to the unfettered access enjoyed by Soviet fishing fleets to traditional grounds in the northern hemisphere.
Little effort was made however to reduce wastage in the notoriously inefficient Soviet catch-to-market process (and thus feed more of the Soviet population from reduced quotas). Rather, the number of vessels in the Soviet long-range fishing fleet was actually increased after 1976\(^3\). Hence, Soviet reliance on the Exclusive Economic Zones of Southern African, South American and other countries to the south of the equator has not only been determined by the marine resource policies of northern states, but also by the structure of the Soviet fishing fleet. In addition, the enlarged fleet of Soviet super-factory trawlers (of about 4000GRT per vessel) has been designed ‘for Antarctic fisheries, open-ocean operations including fisheries on continental slopes outside the 200 mile limit, and super deep water trawling’\(^3\). The South Pacific and adjoining waters are suitable for all of these operations.

The main question over Australasian servicing facilities is in regard to the geographical proximity of Australia and New Zealand to the main Soviet fishing grounds in the region. In regard to Soviet Antarctic fisheries, the main krill and finfish stocks are concentrated in the Atlantic Ocean sector of the Antarctic; ie areas close to 180 degrees from the southernmost points of Australasia\(^3\). While McElroy noted in 1984 that the ‘recent growth in the proportion of the Russian krill catch from the Indian Ocean sector’\(^3\) augured well for the development of support facilities in the Australian/NZ area, this trend has not continued. The Indian Ocean sector is not a major fishery for either the Soviet (Table 1.3) or other (Table 1.1) fleets.

It would appear that the Soviet Antarctic fishing effort would be serviced and supported more easily and efficiently from Latin American ports, rather than by sending vessels steaming all the way to New Plymouth or Hobart. This suggestion becomes all the more sensible when the fluctuating levels of the Antarctic catches are considered. While an estimated 250 to 300 Soviet freezer and factory trawlers were responsible for a catch of 400,000 tonnes of krill in Antarctic waters in 1980\(^3\), continued fishing at this level cannot be guaranteed year by year given the threats of over-exploitation and pollution to the fragile Antarctic ecosystem\(^3\). Finfish fisheries
in the Antarctic region may not be too dependable either. Depletion of these stocks by overfishing has already forced the USSR to move some of its operations to the southeast Pacific outside the Chilean 200nm EEZ\(^3\). The future of Soviet Antarctic fisheries is also brought into question by the enormous expense involved in operating factory trawlers and processing plants in such waters and by the poor meat yield of the krill catch\(^3\).

Such unreliability in Soviet Antarctic fisheries suggests that a South American servicing facility would be a more practical solution. In this way the huge Soviet Southeast Pacific fishing operations could keep the facilities in business, no matter what Antarctic catch occurred. As Table 1.3 shows, the west coast of South America is an extremely important Soviet fishery which developed rapidly in the late 1970s following the spread of the "EEZ disease". As a percentage of total world catch, the Southeast Pacific is sizeable (nearly 15 percent in 1986, Table 1.1), and the Soviets have plenty of room to increase their share of this rich fishery; taking less than ten percent of the total Southeast Pacific catch in the mid 1980s.

If the development of Soviet Southeast Pacific fishing operations was to depend upon New Zealand (and even further to the west), Australian servicing facilities long passage times would be involved. This does not seem economic. The planned level of vessel visits (about 100 a year under the Soviet proposals to both New Zealand and Australia, see Ch.2 and Ch.5), would probably constitute a very small proportion of the total Soviet fleet involved in the Southeast Pacific and the diversion of such numbers would hardly seem worth the effort. However Soviet vessels also caught 152,000 tonnes of fish in 1986 in the "Southwest Pacific" region (see Table 1.3). This may be an indication of Soviet plans to develop deep water fishing to the east of the New Zealand EEZ. The world catch in this latter area, though, remains negligible (at less than one percent of the total catch by all fishing nations, Table 1.1), and would be unlikely to justify new support facilities in New Zealand.
The question, then, as to where the New Zealand and Australian-bound Soviet vessels will actually be operating is likely to remain clouded until either the USSR releases details on the subject or actually gains an Australasian facility and begins using it. In terms of the commercial implications of an agreement on port access, it is not particularly vital for either Australia or New Zealand to know in advance where the vessels using their facilities will be operating. Be it the Antarctic, Southeast Pacific or elsewhere, income will be received. But in terms of their own fisheries interests and at the strategic level, such knowledge would be critical. At this stage doubts over the commercial rationale behind the Soviet servicing proposals make the case for being wary of the political and military spinoffs all the more convincing.

Soviet fishing operations in the regions discussed in this chapter seem to be either too distant, too uneconomical, or too unreliable to justify in any complete sense fishing agreements with SPISs or servicing facilities in New Zealand or Australia. It is hoped that the following chapters will produce a framework within which these uncertainties can be clarified.


In particular, where the fulfillment of rigid quotas has taken precedence over both the processing and sale of the finished product and the ecological state of the fishing grounds. See V. Lysenko, A Crime Against the World, (tr. by M. Glenney), London: Gollancz, 1983, for a description of the wastage involved in the Soviet fishing industry.

For example, New Zealand fishing vessels were requested in 1977 to report FFV activity in the NZ EEZ; a form of intelligence gathering with moderate military utility; see Ch. 2.


V. Lysenko, op. cit., pp. 203-205.

ibid., p. 206.

See R. Ayson, op. cit., p. 5.

ibid., pp. 3-4.

Far Eastern Economic Review, 16 February 1989. The vessels to be handled by Philseco included ships from the Far East Shipping Company; vessels of this line visit Australian ports regularly. More recently, Manila has given approval to the USSR for negotiations with Philippine shipyards for the servicing of Soviet fishing vessels, but this is likely to be in Batangas and on Cebu Island, away from Subic, see Philippine Daily Inquirer, 19 March 1989.


ibid., p. 81.

ibid.


ibid.
‘Political officers’ on board the vessels report to the Maritime Division of the KGB, V. Lysenko, op. cit., p.89.


For expanded coverage, see R. Ayson, op. cit., p.9.

J.T. Richelson, loc. cit.

V. Kaczynski, Distant Water Fisheries and the 200 Mile Economic Zone, Occasional Paper, No.34, Law of the Sea Institute, Richardson School of Law, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1983, p.34.


ibid. Most of the post-1976 distant water fleet increase came in the form of these huge vessels.


ibid., p.246.

ibid., p.242.


V. Kaczynski, op. cit., p.37.

ibid., pp 35-37.
CHAPTER 2: NEW ZEALAND.

Soviet fishing vessels have been operating in New Zealand waters since at least 1971 - seven years prior to the declaration of New Zealand’s 200nm Exclusive Economic Zone and establishment of foreign fishing vessel (FFV) licensing agreements.

New Zealand’s fisheries resources and those immediately outside its Exclusive Economic Zone, are not such as to ever be a major part of the overall harvest by the Soviet worldwide fishing fleet. Hence, the rather high level of interest shown by the Soviet Union in developing its fisheries operations around New Zealand raises the question of non-fisheries objectives for the fishing fleet. The same can also be said for the series of Soviet proposals regarding the establishment in New Zealand of servicing facilities for Soviet fishing vessels operating outside the New Zealand EEZ. This chapter explores these two main areas of Soviet fishing interest in New Zealand and gives an indication as to how Soviet political objectives have been furthered in this process.

Early Soviet fishing activity off New Zealand.

The first foreign fishing vessels appeared off New Zealand’s coasts in 1957, in the form of Japanese snapper long-line vessels. These were followed by Korean and Taiwanese vessels. In 1967, the Japanese started trawling for demersal (bottom-dwelling) fish; four years later the first Soviet vessels arrived, taking 10,400 tonnes of hoki in their first (recorded) year of operation. At this time the FFVs were able to work all areas outside the twelve mile limit. The 1965 Territorial Sea and Fishing Zone Act had established a nine mile fishing zone outside the three mile territorial boundary. In 1971 the latter was extended to the full twelve miles. Such were the "restrictions" imposed by New Zealand on foreign fishing activity in these early
years.

Soviet catches off New Zealand soon surged as vessels moved to southern waters. In 1972 56,800 tonnes of fish were landed and by 1977 (the last year of unfettered access), the Soviet catch had reached 123,000 tonnes. Blue whiting, hoki and squid were the main contributors. Complaints over Soviet fishing methods were quick to surface. One newspaper report listed the charges as follows; ‘six-month voyages, rarely touching land, disregarding quotas, mesh sizes, even the commercial viability of fishing grounds’⁴.

Despite these unregulated practices, it is not certain whether New Zealand operations were commercially viable for the Soviet Union. For New Zealand’s part, Soviet fishing in the pre-licensing days brought few benefits. Port tax for fishing vessels was introduced in 1976 and there were foreign currency earnings from berthing, bunkering and storage facilities under New Zealand’s open port policy. But these provisions applied mainly to the Japanese fleet. Soviet fishing vessels received supply and bunkerage offshore from their own fisheries support vessels. The Soviet fleet was based in Nadhodka, 200 miles east of Vladivostok, and most of the fish and squid caught were offloaded in Singapore.⁵

New Zealand’s ability to control and respond.

Concern over the vulnerability of a finite and largely unprotected resource to exploitation by foreign harvestors was underlined by the lack of knowledge of actual foreign fishing vessel activities. As an example, Bradstock notes that before the EEZ declaration, ‘Soviet catch data was only available through the United Nation’s FAO Annual Yearbook of Fisheries Statistics, which gave no breakdown of species, areas fished, and amount of fishing effort, for waters within 200 miles of the New Zealand coast’⁶.

Indeed New Zealand’s knowledge of FFV activity in its own waters was far from complete. Recognition of this fact was shown in 1975, when New Zealand
began patrols of fishing areas by its small contingent of coastal patrol craft. A much more obvious sign of such concern was the two week survey undertaken by RNZN vessels and RNZAF Orions in February 1977. The survey managed to locate 52 Soviet fishing vessels, (dwarfed by the massive Japanese fleet of 335 vessels). The bulk of the Soviet fishing was occurring in southern waters. Twenty-four Soviet vessels were found off the South Island’s east coast and the same number were found east of Auckland Island. Of the 48 Soviet fishing vessels lying within the soon-to-be established 200nm Exclusive Economic Zone, forty were trawlers (compared with 37 at the height of the 1976 season), six were support ships (including one tug) and two were research vessels. An additional indicator of the way New Zealand was being taken for granted was the discovery by one of the Orion patrols of a six metre long mooring buoy 40km east of Banks Peninsula (in the Christchurch area) which was apparently used by Soviet support vessels for anchorage. While the buoy may not have been cause for strategic concern, it was at least deemed by the Royal New Zealand Navy as a menace to navigation.

A few months later the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries published a special supplement to the August edition of Catch (the monthly fisheries journal), which gave descriptions and photographs of Soviet and other foreign fishing vessels working around New Zealand. It also listed procedures for reporting infringements to the 12 mile territorial seas. No less than seven types of Soviet fisheries vessels were listed, ranging from the small side trawlers (55m length, crew of 30) to the huge whaling ships (218m, crew of 510). The supplement provided descriptions of the distinguishing features and technical details of the vessels, and listed the areas in which they operated.

The requirements of resource protection and the need to set up a database for the effective monitoring and control for the upcoming EEZ would have been reasons alone for the publication of such a supplement. The officer in charge of the above survey, Group Captain Hanson RNZAF stated that ‘while any ship can be used for a number of different purposes, and it is known that intelligence gathering has taken
place in other parts of the world, there is no evidence of any such operation in New Zealand waters' 11. However, in 1976 Prime Minister Robert Muldoon had claimed that that some of the Soviet fishing vessels in New Zealand waters were collecting military data12. In addition, the Catch supplement stated that onboard the large Soviet stern trawlers operating around New Zealand, there 'may be a large array of aerials above the bridge'13.

Moreover, close attention was being paid by New Zealand officials to the activities of the Soviet tug, Besstrashnyj. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries requested 'any information on ...transferring cargo and catches at sea - any unusual activities, e.g., movements of the ocean-going tug attending the Russian trawl fleet during the 1977 season'14. If the rationale for such a request was simply to prevent the transfer of unacknowledged catches, then why was special mention made of the tug? After all, it was the Soviet "reefer" vessels which were involved in catch transfers, whereas the tasks of the tug had been described as follows: 'Helps with towing and at-sea repair work. Courier between vessels; transfers crews; and carries out other assignments under command of fleet master'15. This was no normal fishing fleet support vessel.

The dispatch of Soviet fisheries vessels to New Zealand in the early-mid 1970s was matched by moves on the diplomatic and other fronts. For example, in 1972 Soviet observers at the Indo-Pacific Fishing Council in Wellington had proposed the use of Soviet research ships by New Zealand scientists16. Regular official meetings between New Zealand and Soviet Foreign Ministry and Government delegations had been established in that same year; the New Zealand Embassy was opened in Moscow at the end of 1973. In early 1975 the New Zealand Labour Government received a request from the USSR (presumably during the visit of a Soviet parliamentary delegation from 14-22 April17) 'seeking repair facilities for their vessels in New Zealand ports and permission to replace their New Zealand-based crews by air from Russia'18. The newly elected National Government turned down this request in May of 197619.
The security implications of Soviet fisheries access and activities was of obvious concern. Deputy Prime Minister (and Foreign Minister) Brian Talboys made this plain in reference to the Soviet Union’s interest in setting up a fishing base in Tonga. ‘The Leader of the Opposition’, he said, ‘has admitted that he too would be concerned if the USSR set up a base in this area of priority importance to New Zealand’.

Talboys also took the opportunity of the April 1976 visit by a Soviet Foreign Ministry delegation to register the Government’s disquiet over ‘Soviet fishing activities around the New Zealand coast’. (Although, once again, the threat to local marine resources alone would have been reason enough to voice such a complaint).

The New Zealand Minister of Fisheries, J.B. Bolger, then returned the Soviet visit in the middle of the following year.

The licensing of Soviet vessels and the 1978 Agreement.

The passage of the Territorial Sea and Exclusive Economic Zone Act, 1977 (in September of that year) and, more particularly, its full implementation on 1 April 1978, marked the turning point in New Zealand’s position vis-a-vis foreign fishing nations and their vessels. For not only did it bring about a 200nm Exclusive Economic Zone off the New Zealand coast, including small islands to the north (Kermadec Is.), east (Chathams and Bounty Is.) and south (Auckland and Campbell Is.), it also required the presence of Foreign Fishing Vessels in the EEZ to be acknowledged by agreements and licensing. Moreover, the extra effort committed to patrolling the zone would not only verify adherence to negotiated conditions by the FFVs, it would also reduce the chance of non-fishing activities by FFVs going undetected.

Discussions between New Zealand and Distant Water Fishing Nations over access to the new 200nm EEZ began with the visit of a Korean delegation to Wellington from 5-7 December 1977. A Soviet delegation undertook negotiations on a similar agreement from 14-21 December. A Prime Ministerial press statement of 8 December announcing the latter talks, raises several issues pertinent to the strategic
implications of Soviet fisheries. The statement described the objectives of the Soviet Union as follows;

(i) ‘continuing access to the fish resources of the New Zealand zone’,
(ii) ‘access to facilities for repair and maintenance of Soviet fishing vessels and the right to exchange the crews for these vessels’, and
(iii) ‘a joint venture with a New Zealand firm for the development of the fishing industry’ (objectives which have remained more or less constant ever since). The Prime Minister added the reassurance that ‘the Russians have made it clear that they are not seeking to establish an exclusive “base” or enclave in New Zealand. What they want is access to existing facilities’. 24

Nonetheless, the Prime Minister gave at least veiled attention to the potential dangers involved in Soviet fishing vessel access: ‘Allowing the Soviet Union access to existing shore facilities in New Zealand may involve some problems. The Government is prepared to deal with any that may arise’. What he meant was surveillance of Soviet vessels and their personnel. But the most telling comment of all comes at the end of the statement: ‘Any such problems would not be comparable to those that would have arisen from the establishment by the Soviet Union of its own facilities in other parts of the South Pacific’ 25. With the recent Soviet approach to Tonga in mind, the New Zealand Government saw access to its own EEZ and facilities as the lesser of two evils. Access to the New Zealand EEZ had more legitimacy on a commercial basis. Such reasoning clearly suited the Soviets. They were about to secure access to New Zealand’s waters and ports and were free to make further attractive offers to South Pacific island states.

Once more on the heels of the Koreans - a fishing agreement between New Zealand and South Korea was signed 16 March 1978 26 - the Soviet Minister of Fisheries, Aleksandr Ishkov signed a similar agreement with New Zealand’s Foreign Affairs Minister Talboys on 4 April 1978, which went into force on that day.

The Agreement 27 consists of twelve Articles and involves the exchange of no less than six letters. Of particular relevance are the provisions which,
(i) recognize the NZ Government's authority to allocate annually fishing quotas to the USSR (Art.III,s.1c),

(ii) require the Soviet vessels to obtain licenses to pursue those allowable catches (III,3),

(iii) require that Soviet vessels 'allow and assist' boarding by NZ officials and comply with instructions from NZ Government employees and platforms (IV,1c,d), and

(iv) require the Soviets to respond favourably to New Zealand requests for data (VIII,2). The onus is, of course, on the Soviet Union to comply with the requirements of the host nation.

New Zealand's major "concessions" (given the concern over further Soviet access either by sea or air), are contained in Article IX and confirmed in Letter No.5. The New Zealand Government is obliged to enter into negotiations with the Soviet Union to consider (among other points) the entry, provisioning, refuelling and repair in New Zealand ports of Soviet vessels either licensed to fish in the New Zealand EEZ or from other areas. Consideration would also be given to the 'replacement of their crews by air through flights to and from New Zealand' (IX,1d). The New Zealand Government thus has an obligation to consider the 1988 Soviet proposal for access which is discussed at length below. Letter No.5 specifies that both air and sea access will, or at least could, be limited to designated ports and airports (the latter via designated routes and carriers). The Agreement was originally valid until 30 June 1982 and was followed on 1 September 1978 by a NZ-Japan fishing agreement 28 , thus forming the triad of licensed DWFNs to operate in New Zealand waters.

Having signed these agreements, the New Zealand Government proceeded to allocate quotas from the calculated surpluses (the amount of the "Total Allowable Catch" not required by domestic operators) to the Distant Water Fishing Nations. Quotas are allocated according to fish species and to the areas of the New Zealand EEZ. A map giving the eight main subdivisions of the EEZ is given in appendices. The DWFNs are then required to submit plans for;

(i) fishing; the numbers of vessels and, periods of operation,
(ii) trans-shipment; the movements of fish carriers and the amount of time to be spent in EEZ areas, the sequence of offloading vessels, and
(iii) supply; the supplies to be brought in by support vessels

Hence, before Soviet or other Foreign Fishing Vessels are licensed and have begun fishing within the EEZ, New Zealand authorities have a reasonable idea of the scale and location of their operations over the next twelve months. Such intelligence is most necessary to respond to concerns over "non-fishing" activities. Another aid to EEZ control and enforcement is the requirement for the FFVs to enter port in order to be licensed, inspected and identified (by the vessel’s international call sign being painted on its side). Any visit to port by a Soviet vessel, however, may pose an unnecessary risk. Greater security in one area (checking licensing conditions) may involve slightly less security in another. Nonetheless, Soviet access to New Zealand ports was restricted to vessels entering the EEZ for fishing. Hence it could be claimed with some justification that other Soviet activities in the region were not being directly encouraged.

On New Zealand’s part, financial considerations were clearly a driving factor in signing the Agreement. The Minister of Fisheries stated in 1978 that New Zealand could earn NZ$9,423,000 from the licensed FFVs if the full quotas were caught, with a not inconsiderable $2.9m from Soviet vessels alone, (Japan $5.5m, Korea $1m). At stake were longer term economic considerations as well. Soviet access to New Zealand’s marine resources would strengthen the overall NZ-USSR trading relationship, running strongly in New Zealand’s favour. (Along similar lines the New Zealand Government did not open fisheries access negotiations with Japan until the latter had agreed to improve conditions for the entry to its markets of New Zealand agricultural products).
A series of restrictions on Soviet fishing.

However, the Soviets were never to repeat their most profitable year of operations off New Zealand; 1977 when they took 123,000 tonnes of fish at the cost of operating expenses only. Soviet fishing activities in New Zealand waters since that time have been punctuated by a series of restrictions. First, New Zealand has reserved an increasing proportion of the Total Allowable Catch for domestic vessels, hence quotas for Distant Water Fishing Nations have been progressively reduced. As Table 2.2b shows, the reduction in allocations offered to the Soviet Union was particularly harsh in the early years of the scheme. The revenue gained by New Zealand from licensed Soviet vessels was reduced from NZ$2.35m in the 1979/80 finfish and squid years to $970,000 in the 1984/85 years. This occurred despite significant increases in the fee per tonne rates for both finfish and squid.

This trend was formalised by a new policy on deepwater trawl fisheries which came into effect on 1 April 1983. Access for foreign fleets to prime finfish species was to be further restricted (with the exception of Area E) from 1 October 1984. The Soviet Union and other Distant Water Fishing Nations were given outlines of this plan during a series of bilateral talks in April-May 1984. Along the same lines, the 1978 agreement with the USSR was extended for just two years in both 1982 and 1984. As a result, the catch by licensed Soviet vessels as a percentage of the total catch in New Zealand waters was reduced to very moderate levels by the mid-1980s.

Second, Soviet access was limited to mark New Zealand's disapproval of the invasion of Afghanistan. New Zealand has thus directly linked policy on Soviet fishing access with its assessment of wider strategic matters. Not only was the overall Soviet quota reduced (the allocation for finfish dropped from 124,000t for the year ending 31 March 1980 to 32,500t for the following season), but Soviet fishing activities were restricted to the 'rougther southern waters of area E'.
At the pure fisheries level of the relationship, neither New Zealand nor the Soviet Union’s interests were inordinately impaired. As Beaglehole notes, New Zealand could turn to other Distant Water Fishing Nations if need be and to its growing domestic fisheries industry to plug any gaps left by the Soviets. The Soviet Union not only retained access (albeit at lower catch levels) to the zone in which the bulk of its catch had been obtained traditionally, (ie Area E), but ‘the expansion of NZ-USSR joint-venture fishing enabled the USSR to gain access to other New Zealand fishing areas’.

Despite these qualifications, Soviet autonomy in fisheries operations decisions was reduced. The restriction to Area E can be seen to have a strategic as well as a diplomatic message. While Soviet fishing vessels were still able to call at ports further to the north (especially at Wellington) the ability to loiter in non-Area E zones was reduced. A similar approach can be seen in the treatment of the Soviet missile and satellite training ship, the Kosmonaut Gyorgij Dobrovolskij in September 1988. The ship, which it was considered would monitor communications signals, was denied access to Wellington and redirected to Bluff (the southernmost port on the South Island) for refuelling.

The prospects for a resumption of less restricted access for Soviet fisheries could not have been improved by the record of the USSR’s diplomatic activity in New Zealand. In 1980, the Soviet Ambassador, Vsevolod Sofinsky was expelled when he was found to be passing on funds to a New Zealand political party. In April 1987, the fourth ranking Soviet diplomat in New Zealand, Sergei Budnik, was expelled on charges that he was a KGB officer and was ‘not acting in accord with his declared status as a diplomat’. By the time that the Soviet Union was allowed access to other areas of the New Zealand EEZ (for the 1988-89 fishing year), allocations to and catches by the Soviet fishing fleet had declined to rather unsubstantial levels. Indeed, at the time of writing the Soviets had not accepted any portion of the 1988-89 fish allocation offers from the New Zealand Government.
As one might expect, restricted access to New Zealand’s EEZ and smaller allowable catches has been accompanied by a reduction in the number of Soviet fishing vessels operating in New Zealand waters. From March 1980 until November 1982 the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries publication, *Catch*, included maps which indicated the presence of Foreign Fishing Vessels in the New Zealand EEZ. The reduction in Soviet trawler numbers is very noticeable; from 40 in February 1977 (see above) to six in mid-February 1980. All of the latter were operating in Area E.

At the height of the fishing season in 1981, between ten and twelve Soviet trawlers were operating in this southern portion of the EEZ. Throughout that year there was almost always at least one Soviet fishing or fishing-related vessel in port. Soviet vessels would enter the New Zealand EEZ in the north-west quadrant before proceeding southwards for licensing and fishing. The trans-shipment of catches occurred in Pegasus Bay (off Banks Peninsula). Overall, Soviet fishing activities were confined to the areas required of them in the post-Afghanistan arrangement; around the Auckland and Campbell Islands in the far south of the EEZ. The ports most frequently visited by the Soviet fishing fleet were Wellington, Lyttleton (Christchurch) and Nelson.

While at times in the mid-1970s up to forty Soviet trawlers could be found operating simultaneously within 200 miles of New Zealand’s coasts, throughout the whole of 1983 only 23 such vessels fished in those waters. At an average catch of little more than 1000t per trawler, this level of activity could not have been commercially viable. In 1984, just 21 Soviet trawlers operated in the New Zealand EEZ.

Soviet fishing activity in the late 1980s.

It is possible to gauge very accurately Soviet fishing activities in New Zealand waters over the past three years thanks to a series of reports published by New Zealand’s External Assessment Bureau. The very act of their publication giving some
indication of the seriousness with which this topic is taken in some quarters. In 1986, 1987 and 1988, 25, 18 and 18 Soviet fishing vessels respectively, operated under license and/or charter in the New Zealand EEZ. These were accompanied by 20, 20 and 12 fisheries associated vessels respectively, as shown in Table 2.4.

In the 1988 fishing year the continuing reduction in Soviet fisheries activity in New Zealand waters is quite marked, even allowing for the fact that operations in 1986 and 1987 were at modest levels only. The majority of Soviet fishing is carried out by Fish Factory Trawler/Freezer vessels, and an increasing number of these are being used in charter arrangements with New Zealand companies. Fletcher Fishing is an example of the latter. Indeed, since the Soviet Union has not taken up any of the 1988/89 allocation, all Soviet fishing activity in NZ waters at the time of writing is being carried out by vessels under charter.

With this trend towards chartered fishing, the port of Nelson tends to be favoured over Lyttleton and Dunedin. Yet, Wellington continues to be visited by Soviet fishing vessels about 15 times a year (see Table 2.5). Fisheries associated vessels (interestingly enough, given the case of the Kosmonaut Georgij Dobrovolskij) favoured Wellington as a port in 1988. However, it is clear that if New Zealand authorities required further diversions of Soviet vessels away from the capital, there would be alternative ports where the Soviets could achieve their official port call purpose. Table 2.6 shows that the stated reasons for Soviet vessel port calls have been consistent in their frequency over the past three years, especially for licensed and/or chartered vessels.

It is somewhat surprising that the number of fisheries research ships visiting New Zealand ports has remained constant given the bleak outlook for Soviet fishing in New Zealand waters. Table 2.4 also lists visits by Soviet passenger vessels; the means by which the Soviet Union presently brings replacement crews into New Zealand. One of the major sticking points in negotiations over new forms of Soviet vessel access to New Zealand has been the Soviet request to shift crew replacement
from sea to air via the Soviet carrier Aeroflot) and it is to this question that this chapter now turns.

**Soviet proposals for a servicing facility.**

The 1988 Soviet proposal for servicing vessels which operate outside of New Zealand waters in New Zealand ports is the latest in a long line of Soviet requests involving the use of Aeroflot for crew transfer purposes. The Soviets have been especially persistent on this point since their proposal to have a maintenance, repair and servicing facility in Nelson for vessels from the Soviet 'Pacific' fishing fleet was considered by the New Zealand Government in late 1984. The New Zealand Prime Minister announced on 7 December 1984 that the request for Aeroflot landing rights had been turned down, and explained that it was not in New Zealand's economic or political interests to offer a base for fishing vessels operating outside the EEZ. The Government had reviewed the possible economic benefits of the plan before making the decision; factors which had obviously been stressed by the Soviet representatives.

Despite this official refusal, the Soviet Embassy continued to lobby South Island centres in order to foster local momentum in favour of such access. On 14 December 1984, the Soviet Ambassador made a 'courtesy call' on Christchurch mayor, Sir Hamish Hay, during which Aeroflot landing rights to Christchurch were discussed. Such initiatives then ran foul of the New Zealand Governments own difficulties with ANZUS. Following the decline of the request for a port visit by the USS Buchanan in January 1985, the Lange Government found it necessary to demonstrate that the Soviet Union would not benefit. On 22 February 1985, Ambassador Bykov was summoned by the Prime Minister and told to reduce Soviet diplomatic activity in New Zealand.

Further Soviet requests along the same lines were made during the visit to Moscow by New Zealand Overseas Trade Minister Mike Moore. After discussions
with acting Soviet Minister of Fisheries, Nikolai Kudryavtsev and the further extension of the 1978 Agreement, the New Zealand Government once again rejected the request for Aeroflot landing rights on 27 September 1986.

The prospects for the establishment of a New Zealand base for Soviet vessels operating outside New Zealand waters, and the attendant granting of landing rights for Aeroflot, appeared to be better in early 1989 than at any previous time. On 22 September 1988, Prime Minister Lange announced that discussions were taking place with the Soviets concerning a servicing agreement. The agreement would, if signed, ‘lay out certain basic ground rules’ and ‘it would then be over to any New Zealand company to enter into an agreement with Soviet trading enterprises’. These basic rules would concern ‘bunkering, proving, maintenance and servicing of Soviet fisheries vessels from outside New Zealand’s EEZ including major repairs and annual survey as well as arrangements for the exchange of Soviet fisheries personnel by air’. The interesting justification for the ‘more positive approach’ by the New Zealand Government was described by Mr Lange as ‘changed international circumstances’.

As has already been mentioned, the Government also decided to allow the Soviet Union to fish in areas other than Area E in the upcoming season (1988/89). The change in international circumstances could have included not only the obvious: (i) encouraging signs in Afghanistan (the original cause for the restrictions); but also (ii) the perception that Soviet diplomatic activity in the South Pacific was now less provocative and most unlikely to succeed; (iii) recognition that previous refusals by New Zealand to similar proposals had hardly discouraged Pacific island states from granting access to Soviet vessels; and (iv) possible foreknowledge that the Australian Government was considering a similar request from the USSR.

Since this announcement, developments in the latest Soviet drive for access and landing rights have been dominated by local community interest in servicing the fleet and Deputy PM Palmer’s visit to the Soviet Union in November 1988. On 8 October of the same year, the Taranaki-based company, Technic Group Ltd, claimed that it had signed an agreement with Sovrybflot to represent the latter’s interests in the
search for servicing facilities in New Zealand\textsuperscript{55}. According to a series of media reports in October and November, the proposed facilities would involve and require;

(i) the capacity to service `at least 100` Soviet fishing vessels per year\textsuperscript{56},

(ii) since each trawler would have a crew of approximately eighty, more than 300 Soviet personnel would be flown in and out of the country each week\textsuperscript{57}, to give a total of more than 16,000 Soviet fisheries personnel passing through the facility each year\textsuperscript{58}.

(iii) Aeroflot charter flights landing at one of the two New Zealand airports capable of taking the Ilyushin 67 aircraft\textsuperscript{59} (eg Auckland airport in the case of a Port Taranaki facility\textsuperscript{60}, Christchurch airport for a Lyttleton facility\textsuperscript{61}).

(iv) the introduction of suitable dry dock or synchrolift facilities to handle the large vessels\textsuperscript{62} into the chosen port(s). The main contenders at the end of 1988 included Lyttleton, Nelson and Pt Taranaki. Lyttleton’s already existing dry dock is not capable of handling vessels the size of those planned to visit New Zealand\textsuperscript{63}.

(v) the possible use of `skills from the Soviet Union’s large Nahkhodka shipyards in the Far East’\textsuperscript{64}.

(vi) the provision of adequate sporting and recreational facilities for the Soviet crew members\textsuperscript{65}.

(vii) income for the servicing region of between NZ$43m and NZ$100m per annum\textsuperscript{66}. The figure of NZ$2billion over twenty years\textsuperscript{67} has also been mentioned, giving some indication of the longevity of Soviet operations.

(viii) direct employment of between 200 and 500 persons at the facility, with 500 to 1500 New Zealanders being indirectly engaged\textsuperscript{68}.

Given such optimistic forecasts regarding income and employment, it comes as no surprise that intense competition has arisen between local communities contending for the “contract”. With Christchurch Members of Parliament lobbying for a Christchurch facility (ie, granting Aeroflot landing rights at Christchurch airport)\textsuperscript{69}, the Soviets clearly have more allies for their proposal than was the case in 1984/5. Slava Vasiliev, the New Zealand Sovrybflot representative, has come out in favour of
the Port Taranaki/New Plymouth facilities, but has warned that the Soviet Union may choose Australia: ‘We’ll go where it is cheapest’.

This shrewd use of inter-town competition may help the Soviets gain greater local concessions in a bid to attract the servicing base (eg local provision of a substantial amount of the port infrastructure), but it is not at all certain that if an agreement is reached, the Soviet vessels would be serviced from just one New Zealand port. Nor, more importantly, is it clear whether the 1988 Soviet proposals to Australia and New Zealand are completely interchangeable.

Indeed, remarkably little information has surfaced as to precisely where the Soviet fishing vessels are to come from for servicing in New Zealand. Vasiliev has said that New Zealand has an advantage in bidding for the servicing contract because it is closer to South Pacific and Antarctic fishing grounds used by Soviet vessels. ‘South Pacific’ can only mean South-eastern Pacific, ie off the west coast of South America. But Soviet vessels would need to be a long way from the American continent before steaming to New Zealand (let alone to Australia), became more efficient than heading for Peru, where servicing of Soviet vessels already occurs. Moreover, as has been shown above, Soviet fishing activity in Antarctic waters is concentrated almost entirely in the Atlantic sector; again the voyage to New Zealand would be a long one! New Zealand’s Deputy PM Palmer has stated that ‘we are talking about the servicing of very large mother ships from a very substantial fleet involving ship repairs of a very radical character’. But the difficulty of prediction is underlined by his further comment that ‘they have got 3000 vessels alone in the Pacific fleet’. (The ‘Pacific fleet’ would probably extend to Soviet fishing vessels operating to the north of Japan and these are most unlikely to be candidates for servicing in New Zealand).

Before embarking on his seven day visit to the Soviet Union, Palmer gave a Radio New Zealand interview in which he stated that ‘the facts are that the Soviets are very important trading partners for New Zealand and the economic prospects for this fisheries agreement is [sic] quite important for New Zealand and we need to
pursue it and investigate it". He may have been implying that the New Zealand Government envisaged greater economic benefits would come out of the current proposal than from the 1984/5 Nelson scheme. Palmer also accused Opposition Leader Jim Bolger of adopting 'mental thinking out of the 1950's', following the latter's criticism of Government 'secrecy' in failing to disclose details of proposals regarding Aeroflot. Indeed, the Head of the Soviet Foreign Ministry's South Pacific Department had described as good the chances for New Zealand-USSR cooperation in fisheries and civil aviation. Palmer however noted that this Soviet pronouncement had been the sole development since Lange's original statement on the issue in September 1988.

Palmer became the highest ranking New Zealand Minister to visit the Soviet Union in 28 years, and promised a significant warming of relations between the two countries. Indeed, Palmer expressed his hopes for increased high level exchanges between the USSR and New Zealand, and issued an invitation for the Novosti press agency to set up its office again in Wellington. He also invited Foreign Minister Shevardnadze and Deputy PM Kamentsev to visit New Zealand in 1989; Palmer had met with both men in the USSR as well as Fisheries Minister Kotlyar.

Palmer announced the New Zealand Government's rejection of the Soviet Union's proposal to link the servicing facilities with an increase in the quota assigned to Soviet vessels within the NZ EEZ, and added at the end of his stay that the Soviets appeared to have accepted New Zealand's position on this matter. While Palmer returned to New Zealand on 20 November, other members of the team (including John Matthews of Technic Group) stayed on for discussions regarding the specific Soviet requirements for the servicing facility.

At the time of writing, a considerable amount of discussion and background work on the proposal remained. The overall process consists of at least four stages: (i) the Soviets and interested New Zealand companies discuss in detail the specific requirements for the facility and examine what can be provided by New Zealand businesses,
(ii) with an understanding and approval of the economic benefits to be gained by New Zealand and the nature and quantity of work and investment to be provided by New Zealand business interests, the NZ Government negotiates with the USSR an "umbrella" agreement paving the way for Soviet access. This is likely to be in the form of an amendment to the 1978 Agreement,

(iii) separate negotiations between the NZ Government and Aeroflot to cover the air access requirement for crew changeover purposes,

(iv) the Soviets negotiate directly with New Zealand companies for the actual provisioning of servicing facilities. It is unlikely that this stage will be reached before mid-late 1989.

Indeed, the prospects for such a servicing facility in New Zealand have begun to look increasingly unlikely. The Soviet Ambassador Yuri Sokolov stated in March 1989 that he was 'not very optimistic' about the prospects for a New Zealand facility. The restructuring of the Soviet fishing industry, said Sokolov, meant that it was now up to Soviet fishing companies (ie Sovrybflot) rather than the Ministry of Fisheries to decide the sites for such facilities. This would mean that economic considerations would take priority and hence Australia was thus much more likely to be chosen to service the fleet. This comment seems to confirm suspicions that political objectives had been the driving force behind the series Soviet proposals to New Zealand.

Security concerns.

Even if the commercial benefits to New Zealand show great promise and New Zealand companies are able to provide precisely the facilities required by the Soviets, the New Zealand Government would still have to face up to Aeroflot access. This is an essential precondition for the agreement as in 1984. Observing that Singapore services part of the Soviet fleet and that Singaporean leader Lee Quan Yew was 'not a communist', Prime Minister Lange expressed his doubts about the Aeroflot requirement: 'I've always been a bit chary about that....Soviet seamen can get off Air
New Zealand, off Singapore Airlines or whatever, as well as the next person91. The Government’s apprehension on this point is very understandable (see Ch.1) and is patent evidence that the strategic applications of the Soviet proposal have been kept in mind.

Over seventeen years, published testimony as to these security concerns over already-existing Soviet fisheries activities in New Zealand waters appears to have been minimal at best. It is clear that the New Zealand Government has not been completely naive on the matter. Yet, the establishment and extension of a Soviet presence which has the respectable image of commercial legitimacy, has been pursued rather successfully by the USSR.

The Soviet Union’s performance on the technical side of fisheries has often been superior to that of other nations. In the first twenty-two months of licensed Foreign Fishing Vessel operations in the New Zealand EEZ, only two Soviet vessels were arrested for offences (both for using undersized mesh) compared with fourteen arrests of Korean vessels92. New Zealand observers on Soviet fishing vessels (under the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries’s observer scheme) have been generally well treated by cooperative Soviet captains and crews93. However, the commercial realities are questionable. As Beaglehole writes; ‘although it is not possible to determine the real costs faced by Soviet enterprises, one of the former joint-venture partners informed the writer that on their calculations they could not make economic sense of the Soviet fishing commitment to the New Zealand area’94.

While it is known that the Soviet Union has taken advantage of the commercial, hard-nosed motives of other states to pursue strategic objectives, this would seem to be most applicable to the USSR’s fishing relationships with the Pacific Island states. In the case of New Zealand, commercial motives on the part of the Soviets are at least plausible, and definitely make sense if consideration is given to trade in other commodities with New Zealand95.

However, there are indications that the Soviet Union has sought to apply political pressure on the New Zealand Government via the numerous promises of
servicing contracts to local administrations. The appeals to Christchurch (see above) were not the only cause for concern in 1984. The Nelson facility offer also came hard on the heels of New Zealand's split with the United States over port access for American vessels. The intense Soviet efforts in New Zealand were intended (as an attempt) to widen that division. Using the sweetener of commercial advantages to local communities, the Soviets were making use of economic means to pursue rather more extensive ends.

Even if the Soviet Union's 1988 proposal for servicing facilities have been made during a more settled period in New Zealand's foreign relations, there would be other causes for concern over such a development. First, the sheer number of Soviet personnel entering New Zealand would create the need for a substantial increase in surveillance capabilities. This is particularly the case if one of the possibilities mentioned by Soviet representatives, namely the use of shipyard personnel from Nahodka, came to fruition. Given the experience of Singapore and the concerns over the Faroes facility expressed in the first chapter of this thesis, the potential security risk is obvious. Nahodka is a major centre for the KGB and serves as 'the principal home-port for ships of the Far East-based Maritime Border Guard' (also of the KGB).

Second, the lack of knowledge regarding the types of Soviet fishing vessels to be serviced at the proposed facility (their age, size, class, carrying capacity, ability to hide submersibles, port of origin and formation of approach to the New Zealand EEZ), means that direct military applications of such a fleet cannot be dismissed. However, the record of Soviet fishing vessels in New Zealand waters to date does seem to have been reassuring in this context. Indeed, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries observers who talked with the author were insistent that the Soviets showed no interest in collecting signals from Wellington. (If fingers are to be pointed in this area, they should be in the direction of Japanese fishing vessels lying off Hokitika in the South Island). The radio equipment on the Soviet vessels which fish in New Zealand waters tends to be antiquated and secret SIGINT (signals intelligence).
collection rooms are noticeable for their absence. Interestingly though, observers are welcome to take photographs of any parts of the vessels except the radio equipment.

In addition, the claim by Soviet captains that they are able to contact Vladivostok but not Wellington by telephone, seems difficult to believe. A 1984 article noted that the Soviet Embassy in Wellington ‘in the past has been its main listening post in the South Pacific. It played a significant role in monitoring the activities of the huge maritime effort, particularly in fishing, which the Soviet Union has mounted in the region and down to the Antarctic’. A week does not go by on the regular Soviet fishing vessels in the New Zealand EEZ without the captain being in contact with Vladivostok by telephone which then connects him with Moscow via radio. During the height of the season this contact is a nightly occurrence. The Fleet Commander of the fishing fleet is likely to be in even more regular contact with his superiors. Given the strong GRU/Ministry of Fisheries ties (see Ch.1) there are obvious security implications here, especially in times of tension and war. One would hope that this speculation never has that wartime opportunity to be tested.
M.C. Bradstock, From 12 to 200, New Zealand’s exclusive economic zone, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Media Services, June 1979, p.4.

ibid.

ibid.

Evening Post, 22 January 1976.


M.C. Bradstock, loc. cit.

Evening Post, 22 January 1976.

Evening Post, 8 March 1976.

ibid.


Evening Post, 8 March 1977.


Catch ’77, August Supplement...p.9.

ibid. p.20.

ibid., p.20.

Dominion, 28 October 1972.


NZFAR, 26, 4, April-June 1976, p.78. The wording is from a speech by the National Government’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Brian Talboys, in which he criticized the Labour Government’s tardiness in responding to the Soviet proposal.

ibid.

ibid., p.79.

ibid., p.67. The delegation was headed by V.P. Suslov, Head of the Second European Division in the Soviet Foreign Ministry.

NZFAR, 27, 3, July-September 1977, p.38.


NZFAR, 27, 4, October-December 1977, p.45. However the Soviets were to request that these ‘existing’ facilities be made available for the maintenance of vessels operating outside the NZ EEZ, J.H. Beaglehole, ‘The Economics and Politics of New Zealand’s Trade Relationship with the USSR’, Australian Outlook, 42, 2, August 1988, p.102.

NZFAR, 27, 4, October-December 1977, p.46.

NZFAR, 28, 1, January-March 1978, p.11.


NZFAR, 28, 3-4, October-December 1978, p.20.

M.C. Bradstock, op. cit., p.12.

ibid.

See in particular, J.H. Beaglehole, *op. cit.* For an official comment see Talboy's comments: 'There is .... considerable scope for bilateral trade to continue its expansion over the next few years. The Fisheries Agreement will undoubtedly help toward this', *NZFAR, 28, 2, April-June 1978, p. 22.*


Analysis of overall statistics is not helped by the existence of differing fishing years for TAC assessment, allocations and catches. For finfish the year is from 1 April to 31 March, squid and tuna is 1 September to 31 August. Other statistics presented in this chapter report catches for years ending 31 December.


*NZFAR, 34, 2, April-June 1984, p. 48.* For coverage of the phasing out over time of DWFN activity see *Evening Post,* 10 May 1984.


For 1984-1986 approximately five percent of the total catch in New Zealand waters was made by licensed Soviet vessels. Calculated from *Catch, 1984-1986.*

*NZFAR, 30, 1, January-March 1980, p. 27.*

J.H. Beaglehole, *op. cit., p. 96.*

*ibid.* The Soviets have complained, though, about the fisheries impact of the restriction. In 1987 the leader of the Soviet delegation to the annual bilateral talks maintained that the nature of subantarctic conditions would allow the Soviet Union to catch just half of its 40,000t squid allocation. *ABC, South Pacific Bulletin,* 25 April 1987. Unfortunately catch figures for the 1987/88 year were not available at the time of writing.

*Taranaki Herald,* 30 September 1988, p. 3.

See J.H. Beaglehole, *op. cit., p. 96.* Diplomatic relations at full Ambassadorial level were not restored by NZ until 20 February 1984.


The 1988-89 allocation to the USSR totalled just 12,713.6 tonnes of fish in the New Zealand EEZ. *Catch, November 1988, p. 7.*

*Catch, March 1980, p. 19*

*Catch, November 1985, p. 6.*


It is uncertain what was meant by the 'Pacific' fleet since the Soviets have several fishing fleets in this huge ocean.

See *NZFAR, 34, 4, Oct-Dec 1984, pp. 32-3,* *New Zealand Herald,* 8 December 1984, p. 3. The proposal intended that the Nelson company Anchor Dorman would develop the facilities for the Soviet vessels, including a drydock, see J.H. Beaglehole, *op. cit., p. 102.*


Lange apparently disagreed with the argument that Soviet fishing access to the South Pacific would be an ideal vehicle for subversion, saying that attempts to


Taranaki Herald,10 October 1988,p.2.


The Auckland-New Plymouth link was contained in the initial Sovrybflot/Technic Group plan. See Taranaki Herald, 10 October 1988,p.1. Replacement crews would be flown into Auckland and then bused to New Plymouth, Taranaki Herald, 4 November 1988,p.1.

ibid.


ibid. See also Taranaki Herald, November 4 1988,p.1. The Soviets would prefer a joint venture set-up with the costs of such facilities shared with the New Zealand company.

Evening Post, 7 November 1988,p.13. This is the suggestion of the NZ Sovrybflot representative, Mr Slava Vasiliev.

Taranaki Herald, 18 October 1988,p.3.


Clearly Mr Lean prefers to quote the upper figure of NZ$100m, Taranaki Herald, 9 November 1988,p.3.

Quoted by Technic Group Managing Director, John Matthews, Taranaki Herald, 8 October 1988,p.1.

Taranaki Herald, 9 November 1988,p.3.

Evening Post, 7 November 1988,p.13. This warning has been echoed by Matthews, see Taranaki Herald, 10 October 1988,p.1. A recent report states that 'Australia remains the favoured supply base for the Russians', Pacific Report, No.15, October 13 1988,p.5.

This was pointed out by Philip Woollaston, the Associate Minister Assisting the Deputy PM, New Zealand Herald, 10 October 1988,p.15.

Although Woollaston has also said that the Soviets were talking to companies in both New Zealand and Australia, implying an either/or situation, see ibid.

He also mentioned higher port charges and poorer labour relations as disincentives to locating the facility in Australia; Evening Post, 7 November 1988,p.13.


ibid. If Mr Palmer is talking about 3000 fishing vessels (rather than fishing and associated vessels), this is probably an overestimate.


ibid.


ibid.
Radio New Zealand, op.cit.


ibid.

Evening Post, 28 November 1988,p.7. Novosti had been one of the casualties of the Afghanistan invasion; Sergei Zimyin, the Novosti journalist was expelled from New Zealand in 1980.


ibid.


Taranaki Herald, 3 October 1988,p.3.

ibid.


The MAF observers conduct species compositions of the FFV trawls and report the sightings of other vessels and whales to Wellington.

J.H.Beaglehole, op cit, p.105,n.49.

ibid.,p.96.


CHAPTER 3: KIRIBATI

Regardless of the security implications of a licensed Soviet fishing vessel presence in the South Pacific Island region, the 1985 agreement between Kiribati and the Soviet Union was a watershed in the history of external power activities and efforts in the area. While many commentators searched for immediate military benefits that would accrue to the USSR, the mere fact that the Soviets now had a line of communication and direct commercial relationship with a SPIS (South Pacific Island State) was sufficient to create consternation among the western security community.

However, the USSR's success in gaining access for its fishing vessels to the Kiribati EEZ should not have come as much of a surprise to informed observers. First of all, the Soviet Union had been making similar proposals to SPIS governments for several years (see Chapter 6) and it could not be assumed that every attractive Soviet offer would be met by a firm refusal until the end of time. Second, the actions of the citizens and government of the United States which should presumably have been the state most concerned to deny SPIS fishing access to the Soviet Union, had actually facilitated it.

The latter was no more aptly demonstrated than in the case of the American Tunaboat Association vessel, the Jeanette Diana which was seized by the Solomon Island Government in June 1984. After the Solomon Islands High Court had found the owners and captain of the vessel guilty of fishing illegally in Kiribati waters, the United States Government, bound by the Magnuson Act, reacted by imposing a ban on fish imports from the Solomons and agreed to pay compensation to the guilty parties¹. In doing so, the damaging activities of the ATA, far from being checked as was necessary, were actually being encouraged.

The SPISs were at that time also experiencing problems in their fisheries dealings with Korea, Taiwan and Japan. The offer of a large sum of money for access to Kiribati's Exclusive Economic Zone from a nation which had not previously
appeared to damage local interests, was bound to be attractive. This may be cause for surprise given the obvious ideological chasm between Marxist-Leninism and the prevailing Christianity of the South Pacific, but the weak nature of the Kiribati economy was highest in the minds of Tabai’s Government. With the local phosphate industry no longer in production, Kiribati was attempting to offset its dependence on foreign aid by developing commercial fisheries relationships with DWFNs. However, as the FFV operators tended to assume complete rights to the vital marine resources within Kiribati’s huge EEZ, there was a strong feeling that Kiribati was not receiving its due under these agreements.

With the failure of the negotiations between several South Pacific Island States and the American Tunaboat Association in late 1984, Kiribati lost an important source of fisheries income. The Soviets who, according to Doulman, had been operating a tuna fleet of purse seine and long line vessels ‘in the central and western Pacific since the 1970s’, were therefore presented with an opportunity to augment their South Pacific presence. By late 1984 the USSR had made offers of fisheries agreements to a number of SPIS, including Kiribati and neighbouring Tuvalu. The purse seiner Carol Linda then ran aground in Kiribati’s territorial waters while fishing illegally, thus further inflaming Kiribati-US relations. Negotiations between Kiribati and the Soviet Union over a tuna fishing agreement began in Sydney the following month.

Before a second set of talks in Singapore in late May 1985, Kiribati President Ieremia Tabai stated that the possibility of shore access for Soviet vessels and the stationing of Soviet personnel on Kiribati territory had not been discussed. Soviet access at such a level would undoubtedly cause alarm among concerned states in the region and Tabai was doing his best to balance economic self-interest with the concerns of others: ‘We belong to the West’, he said, ‘but we are the only ones who know finally what is in our national interest’. The Soviets for their part were plainly keen to push for shore access. Kiribati turned down a Soviet request during the Sydney round of talks for port access in order that Soviet vessels could be refuelled
and replenished, and apparently an additional request for the stationing of related personnel on Tarawa\textsuperscript{10}. The Soviet request for port facilities was made despite the obvious inability of Kiribati’s infrastructure to cater for these vessels!

A series of appeals from Australian and New Zealand diplomats and leaders\textsuperscript{11}, including at least three from Australia’s Hawke to Kiribati’s Tabai\textsuperscript{12} followed. The United States Government expressed concern that Soviet fishing vessels in Kiribati’s waters would be used to gather intelligence from the nearby Kwajalein atoll\textsuperscript{13}. Nevertheless, Kiribati went on to sign a one year agreement with the Soviet Union in Manila on August 18 1985. Hence almost a full year before Gorbachev’s watershed Vladivostok speech of July 1986, the Soviet Union had secured a fundamental upgrading of its presence in the South Pacific region.

The agreement itself has not been released; the Kiribati Government has been parsimonious in its distribution for obvious reasons. However, from Doulman’s analysis it appears that the document is similar to the standard South Pacific-DWFN fisheries agreements. Conditions of the Kiribati-USSR agreement include the following;

(i) the access of up to 17 licensed purse seine and longline vessels to Kiribati’s 200nm EEZ,

(ii) a prohibition on these vessels entering Kiribati’s 12nm territorial waters, although port access to Tarawa is allowed under an emergency,

(iii) permission for Sovrybflot supply ships to replenish fishing vessels within the EEZ,

(iv) the requirement that all licensed vessels be in good standing under the Forum Fishing Agency’s Register of Forum Fishing Vessels\textsuperscript{14},

(v) compliance by the Soviet vessels with the standardized provisions followed by the Nauru Agreement group of countries\textsuperscript{15} which, as represented by the practice of PNG, include the requirements that;

(a) all licensed FFV leaving or entering the EEZ must notify by telex their intention to do so 24 hours in advance\textsuperscript{16},

\textsuperscript{10} For location, see map on page 11.

\textsuperscript{11} In May 1983, Kiribati was the only South Pacific country to vote against the United States on the UN Conference on Disarmament which led to the ratification in May 1984 of the Antarctic Treaty.

\textsuperscript{12} Kiribati’s Prime Minister, Sir Patusi Tabai.

\textsuperscript{13} Kiribati is located near the equator and is an archipelago in the central part of the South Pacific Ocean consisting of 32 islands, only 11 of which are inhabited.

\textsuperscript{14} The Forum Fisheries Agency, a regional fisheries management body established by the 1982 South Pacific Conference on Fisheries.

\textsuperscript{15} Nauru Agreement group of countries includes Cook Islands, Palau, Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands.

\textsuperscript{16} Telex is a telegraph service for electronic transmission of typed messages. It is similar to facsimile (fax) systems.
(b) at time of entry to and once a week during operations in the EEZ, the FFV must report exact position and amount of fish on board,
(c) all licensed FFV display international signal letters or radio call signals on the top of the vessel,
(d) vessel numbers be painted on both bow and stern\textsuperscript{17};
(vi) the acknowledgement of Kiribati’s sovereign rights over resources in its EEZ and of Kiribati’s own fishing legislation,
(vii) the acceptance by the Soviet Union of full responsibility for the activities of its vessels within the 200nm zone,
(viii) the payment, in three advance instalments of $US1.5million by the USSR for the above access for one year from the signing of the agreement,
(ix) the possibility of renegotiating, not extending, the agreement\textsuperscript{18}.

While Kiribati has been criticized for its decision to allow Soviet fisheries access, the agreement signed with the USSR was hardly irresponsible. The most careful and stringent clauses could of course not compensate for the very limited capability on the part of Kiribati to monitor any Foreign Fishing Vessel activity within its extensive waters. Kiribati could claim that the decision to allow Soviet vessels in its waters was justified on the grounds of national interest, but the island state was able to control neither the unwanted Soviet activities that might follow from the agreement nor the ‘encouragement that the arrangement would give to the USSR to seek similar access elsewhere in the region’\textsuperscript{19}.

Warnings from those other states that the Soviet Union was interested in more than tuna are at least partially supported by the extent of Soviet fishing in the Kiribati EEZ during the 1985-6 period. The Soviets, not known for their expertise in tropical fishing, used approximately eight fishing vessels (mainly seiners\textsuperscript{20} with associated supply vessels entering the EEZ) to catch about 2000 tonnes of fish\textsuperscript{21}. According to a May 1985 report, most of the Soviet fishing activity was to occur around Tarawa, with less emphasis on the Phoenix and Line Island groups\textsuperscript{22}. 
In an effort to gain much needed currency, tuna caught in the Kiribati EEZ by the USSR was sold in offloading markets such as Singapore or at South American ports. Even at $US1000 per tonne, the sale of all the tuna caught minus operating and access fee costs could only have resulted in a net loss to the USSR over the twelve month period. As a very rough comparison, the Koreans paid Kiribati approximately A$600,000 to allow 110 tuna vessels to fish in the Kiribati EEZ for the year ended February 1989.

For the Kiribati Government, the one year agreement was an undoubted commercial success. Tabai praised the Soviet fishing record on a number of occasions, saying that ‘they have paid up as agreed’, ‘they have behaved as agreed’ and that the Soviets’ record in submitting monthly reports of their catch had been scrupulous. Soviet fishing in other parts of the world has not shared these attributes, however, and there were significant incentives in adhering to Kiribati’s conditions: the better the adherence by the USSR, the starker the contrast with ATA, Japanese and Korean practice and the more attractive an agreement with the Soviets would appear to other SPISs. There were bigger fish in the offing than the tuna off Kiribati.

Once prospects for a more extensive fishing relationship with Vanuatu began to look positive, (see Ch. 4), the USSR was in a position to demand a financially more acceptable renegotiation of the deal with Kiribati. Complaining about the size of the 1985-6 catch off Kiribati, the Soviet negotiators wanted to halve both the number of vessels licensed to operate in the EEZ and the amount paid for that access. It is doubtful, however, that the USSR was especially serious about a further period of access to Kiribati waters, even under such relatively attractive conditions. Acceptance of the new proposal would undoubtedly have cost Tabai’s Government both domestically (the 1985 agreement had polarised Kiribati popular opinions for ‘perhaps the first time’) and regionally: “selling out” to Sovrybflot would not be well received.
With the Kiribati-USSR negotiations breaking down on September 1, 1986\textsuperscript{30}, President Tabai ordered Soviet fishing vessels out of the EEZ on October 15\textsuperscript{31}. This did not, however, spell the end to the Soviet Union’s presence in Kiribati waters: in October 1988, for example, the research vessel Akademik Korolev visited several Kiribati islands in the circumstances of some controversy\textsuperscript{32}, nor did it stop Tabai from making further approaches to the Soviets over renegotiation of the fishing agreement\textsuperscript{33}.

Given the apparent spread of perestroika to the bureaucratically stolid Soviet Ministry of Fisheries, the official Soviet line that "the fishing wasn’t any good so we moved on", has some credence. Many, however, remain unconvinced as to why the Soviets should have pursued an agreement with Kiribati, whose marine resources are inferior to those of so many neighbouring states.

Taking into account the Soviet Union’s tendency to use its fishing fleet as an auxiliary intelligence gatherer (see Ch.1) and the lack of vital data that could be harvested from Kiribati itself, attention has been focused squarely on the monitoring of Kwajalein atoll in the Marshall Islands\textsuperscript{34}, one thousand miles to the north of Kiribati. Long the splashdown point for United States ballistic missile tests out of Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, Kwajalein is the site for important radar, telemetric, and other systems used to track and monitor the missiles\textsuperscript{35}. Radar tracking and other facilities are currently being upgraded at Kwajalein to enable testing for Strategic Defence Initiative projects\textsuperscript{36}, making the atoll an even more valuable target for Soviet SIGINT and ELINT missions.

But if the major Soviet motive for seeking fisheries access in the region was to monitor Kwajalein, the subsequent shift southwards to fish in Vanuatu’s EEZ does not make sense. While the granting of port access in the latter agreement (see Ch.4) would (in theory) permit the establishment of a permanent fishing vessel intelligence mission out of Pt Vila, the distances involved with respect to Kwajalein appears prohibitive. Moreover, the USSR has more efficient (and cost-effective) ways of monitoring the atoll. Dedicated Soviet intelligence vessels frequently visit the waters
around Kwajalein itself; a November 1988 report stated that ‘three times in recent weeks a Soviet surveillance ship has been detected inside territorial waters near the missile range’\textsuperscript{37}. There has also been speculation that a Soviet submarine was deployed near Kwajalein and retrieved a Minuteman ICBM flight recorder which was test-fired from Vandenberg on July 7 1987\textsuperscript{38}. Fishing vessels operating one thousand miles or more further south are not in quite the same category!

On a related topic, it has been suggested by two American officials that the USSR may be planning to establish a base in the region from which to track its own satellite missions (Kwajalein is also used by the US as a station for Pacific Barrier Radar, a chain which tracks Soviet satellites during their space gateway stage in first orbit\textsuperscript{39}). Both authors quote Rear Admiral Edward Baker’s testimony to Congress in 1986; ‘the earth trace of Soviet manned space missions crosses in a path roughly parallel to the Gilbert and Line island chains; regional locations could be ideal for a ground tracking station, emergency landing sites or control facilities for a Soviet anti-satellite programme’\textsuperscript{40}. However, the Soviet Union did not establish ground facilities of any sort in Kiribati; evidence points to the conclusion that the Soviets viewed the agreement with Tabai’s Government as a means to an end, ie that initial access would lead to further opportunities in the region. It is unlikely that their aims included a space tracking facility in Vanuatu; Soviet reluctance to renegotiate a second fishing agreement on generous financial terms (see Ch.4) tends to argue against such a vital strategic objective, especially given the short time frames involved with the two agreements.

Similarly, the Kiribati agreement may have been viewed by the USSR as the first step in gaining a South Pacific base for the Soviet Navy\textsuperscript{41} (the "down from Vladivostok" thesis). But the following considerations bring this suggestion into question; (i) Kiribati did not allow port visits by Soviet fishing vessels, (ii) the relative unimportance of the South Pacific as a naval theatre: Soviet maritime activity in the area is characterized by merchant and "research" vessel operations for which port access in the region was already available, (iii) having once gained port access to
Vanuatu, the Soviet Union did not try seek to retain it by immediately renegotiating the agreement with Lini's Government (see Ch.4), (iv) the unlikelihood of any of the SPISs granting access to Soviet naval vessels in almost any circumstance.

In the same manner, Gardner's suggestion that Soviet fishing vessels operating in Kiribati waters 'could also serve as floating supply depots for submarines' presupposes Soviet submarine activity in the areas adjacent to Kiribati. In the absence of port access, such resupply could be provided just as easily from dedicated vessels out of Vladivostok. The low number of Soviet port visits to Vanuatu during the agreement in 1986-7 does not appear to support the supply depot idea either; a small SPIS is unlikely to be able to provide the resupply requirements of a large Soviet submarine. It is possible, though, that the fishing support vessels may have supplied units of the Soviet Navy en route to the Kiribati and Vanuatu fishing grounds, but such activity could occur regardless of a fishing agreement.

In general, then, the Soviet Union has many superior alternatives at its disposal to undertake these military objectives proposed for the fishing fleet around Kiribati. It is most likely that the achievement of a commercial relationship was but the first stage. What then follows is the opportunity for increased leverage and the prospect of developing further opportunities for influence in the region. These would be reasons enough for the USSR to be pleased with the 1985 Kiribati-Soviet Union Agreement.


D.J. Doulman, op. cit., p.34.


D.J. Doulman, op. cit., p.27.


Pacific Islands Monthly, May 1985, p.16.

ibid.

D.J. Doulman, op. cit., p.32.


Age, 28 August 1985.

see D.J. Doulman, op. cit., p.31.

ibid., p.28. Vessels may be blacklisted on the Register if sufficient evidence is produced by a participating SPIS that illegal fishing activities have occurred. See W.M. Sutherland, ‘Coastal State Co-operation in Fisheries: Emergent Regional Custom in the South Pacific’, International Journal of Estuarine and Coastal Law, 1, 1, 1986, pp.24-25.

Signatories to this 1981 agreement included Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, PNG, and Solomon Islands, ibid., p.20.

Under the Kiribati-USSR Agreement, the supply vessels also must report by telex upon entering or leaving the Kiribati EEZ. D.J. Doulman, loc. cit.

These Nauru Group requirements are set out in D.J. Doulman, ‘Licensing distant-water tuna fleets in PNG’, Marine Policy, 11, 1, January 1987, p.23.


Roniti Teiwaki has given a reported catch of 6500 tonnes, but this would exceed the total reported Soviet catch of Skipjack, Yellowfin and Bigeye tuna (worldwide—see Ch.1). See R. Teiwaki, loc. cit.

23 It has been estimated that the 600 to 700 thousand tonne central-western Pacific tuna catch is worth about US$600m (ie $1000 per tonne), but 1988 prices are a big jump over the tuna recession years of the mid-1980s, where prices were roughly half this amount. See G.Waugh and J.Brown, loc.cit, D.J.Doulman, ‘Tuna Fleet Rides Out Recession’, Pacific Islands Monthly, April 1986.

24 ABC, South Pacific Bulletin, 23 January 1989. The Korean vessels were long-liners.


26 Australian, 16 October 1986.


28 Australian, 16 October 1986.


32 An early report from Radio Kiribati which claimed that the Kiribati Government had only become aware of the vessel’s presence after Christmas Island administrators notified Tarawa that it had already been welcomed there was later denied by Kiribati Foreign Ministry officials. See, ABC, South Pacific Bulletin, 11 October 1988, 12 October 1988.

33 It was reported in January 1987 that Kiribati had made such approaches ‘recently’, Age, 28 January 1987. An early 1986 South Pacific Commission report stated that Tabai ‘has said that his government is prepared to study possible long term proposals to allow port access to the Soviet tuna boats, SPC Fisheries Newsletter, No.37, April-June 1986, p.13.


41 This concern was expressed in writing by Australian Prime Minister Hawke to President Tabai in 1985, D.J.Doulman, ‘The Kiribati-Soviet...’, p.32.

42 P.F.Gardner, op.cit., p.23.
The Vanuatu Government’s support for the Kiribati-Soviet Union Agreement expressed at the South Pacific Forum in Rarotonga in August 1985\(^1\), suggested that a Soviet-Vanuatu deal was well within the realms of possibility. For had not Father Walter Lini’s Government been the maverick in the South Pacific community, especially in its relations with the Soviet Union and such states as Vietnam, Cuba and Libya? In 1982 Vanuatu had expressed its willingness to allow visits by Soviet naval vessels provided that they were neither nuclear powered nor nuclear armed\(^2\). While it is unlikely that the Soviets were clumsy enough to base their entire search for fisheries access in the region on this dubious promise, (which was not repeated, but de-emphasized by Vanuatu) it must not have served as a discouragement to the USSR.

Nevertheless, at the time of the signing of the Kiribati agreement, it appeared to some commentators that Vanuatu was not rushing to secure a fishing relationship with the Soviet Union\(^3\). Desiring first to evaluate the progress of the Kiribati-USSR agreement, the Vanuatu Government established an interdepartmental committee later in 1985 to consider a similar proposal which had come from the Soviet Union in late 1984\(^4\). However, according to an April 1986 newspaper report, the Soviet Union and Vanuatu had been conducting negotiations on the issue for seven months\(^5\). Hence informal talks at the very least had begun as early as September 1985. By April 1986, the committee (headed by Foreign Affairs Secretary Nikenike Vurobarau) was drafting a Memorandum of Understanding on the proposed agreement and was waiting on Soviet estimates of Vanuatu’s tuna resources and of royalties to be paid for access\(^6\). Barak Sope, the Vanua’aku Pati’s General Secretary, was quoted as saying that the proposed agreement was based on the Kiribati-USSR deal. Thus it was suggested that port access would not be allowed by Vanuatu\(^7\).

After a week of Soviet-Vanuatu negotiations in Port Vila towards the end of June 1986, it was revealed that port access was definitely on the Soviet request list. As well as the usual EEZ access provision, the Soviets also included in their draft
agreement the servicing and refuelling of Soviet fishing vessels in Vanuatu ports and
the use of Aeroflot charter flights for crew replacement purposes.

It is clear that the port infrastructure offered by Vanuatu, especially the deep
port at Palikula (on Espiritu Santo) which had been constructed by Taiwan, was
much more attractive to the USSR than the paucity of facilities available at Kiribati.
Vanuatu was apparently keen that the Soviets take over the fish freezing facilities at
Palikula which the Japanese were about to vacate.

In the midst of the negotiating process came two developments which could
only have improved the chances of an outcome favourable to the USSR. On 1 July
1986, Vanuatu and the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations. Then, in the
middle of December 1986, the Soviet Union was the first of the nuclear powers to
sign the protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, (a move which could not
have gone unnoticed by the intensely anti-nuclear Vanuatu). The timing of these
developments was most fortuitous for the Soviets!

After a week of Soviet-Vanuatu negotiations in Sydney which concluded on
December 11, all issues bar the exact amount of royalties to be paid by the USSR, had
been resolved. The imminence of an agreement aroused warnings of Soviet
interference in the South Pacific from Vincent Boulekone, leader of the opposition in
Vanuatu, and prompted Australia’s Foreign Minister Hayden to issue a statement on
the issue. Lini rejected the warnings over Soviet activities contained in the latter,
saying that 'the advantage is that.....Vanuatu has a small population, making it easy to
detect any mysterious activities, whereas in Australia and New Zealand it is not so
easy and international espionage is on the increase'. Hayden’s reaction, said Lini,
was ‘Australian paranoia’.

With the final round of negotiations taking place in January 1987, Vanuatu
and the Soviet Union (represented by the Ambassador to Australia, Fiji and Vanuatu,
Dr E.M.Samoteikin) signed the second agreement allowing Soviet fishing vessel
access to an SPIS EEZ on January 27. Similarities with the previous Kiribati accord
include;
(i) the twelve month duration of the agreement, with additional access to be settled under a new agreement, rather than by extension of the original,
(ii) access for Soviet fishing vessels to the 200nm EEZ, although in this case for a maximum of eight vessels only,
(iii) a prohibition on fishing within Vanuatu’s 12nm territorial waters,
(iv) the payment of a comparable lump sum (US$1.5m) by the Soviet Union.

The main distinction between the two agreements was the granting by Vanuatu of port access for the Soviet vessels, ostensibly for replenishment purposes. The fishing vessels were to be allowed ‘general access’ according to Clarence Mare, Vanuatu’s assistant Foreign Secretary. Aeroflot was not given access under the agreement, causing the alarm voiced over Soviet intrusion to be tempered by at least one sigh of relief.

Whatever the motives of the USSR might have been in signing, very little feeding of the Soviet population took place via their agreement with Vanuatu. Just 12 tonnes of fish were caught by Soviet vessels in the twelve month period, confirming somewhat the impressions of many commentators that fishing was not the Soviet Union’s foremost priority. In March 1987, the Managing Director of the South Pacific Fishing Corporation, Eisei Ishikawa had noted that the fee of US$1.5million did not accord with the poor and highly seasonal (December-March) tuna fisheries in Vanuatu.

Admiral Lyons, Commander of the United States Pacific Fleet, supported this line of thought, saying that the high fee made the tuna caught by the USSR around Vanuatu the most expensive fish in the world.

If the deal was a purely commercial one for the Soviet Union, one would expect that the maximum number of vessels allowed would have been employed to justify the fees paid. However, as had been the Soviet practice in the waters of Kiribati, less than half of the vessels allowed to fish in Vanuatu’s EEZ were doing so at any one time. But twelve tonnes spread over just two or three vessels does not full time fishing make, and the Soviet fishing vessels spent considerable time in the Vanuatu EEZ not engaged in fishing. An Orion surveillance flight on March 30, 1987,
located five Soviet purse seiners about ten miles outside the boundary of the Solomon Islands' EEZ, indicating that more vessels were available for full time fishing in the waters of Vanuatu if more serious fishing was the goal (and that non-Vanuatu EEZ fisheries were more productive).

Lacking tuna fishing expertise and appropriate equipment, the first visit to port by a Soviet fishing vessel was an exercise in public relations as much as anything else. The 30m "Tamga", which visited Port Vila in April 1987, had a crew of 32 and the capacity to carry 700 tonnes of fish. The Director of Vanuatu's Fisheries Department, Richard Kaltonga said that the "Tamga", which obtained food and fuel supplies while in port, was not a 'spy' ship and was similar to other FFVs being used in Vanuatu's waters. The Vanuatu Fisheries Department said that five other Soviet fishing vessels were operating within the Vanuatu EEZ at the time.

Following one of the most unproductive twelve months spent by any Distant Water Fishing Nation in another nation's EEZ, Samoteikin indicated the Soviet Union's willingness to renegotiate because of good catches made by Soviet vessels around Vanuatu in 1987! As if to underline the absurdity of his own argument, the Soviet Ambassador said that the earlier agreement with Kiribati had not proven economically viable. However, when it came to the "renegotiations" themselves, Soviet officials were quick to point out that they were unhappy with the catch levels obtained in 1987.

Indeed, prospects for successful renegotiation did not look promising after a visiting Soviet trade mission had complained about poor catches and told the Vanuatu Government that the USSR was now interested only in multilateral fishing agreements because tuna, as migratory species, did not confine themselves to single EEZs. Nevertheless, the first round of new Vanuatu-USSR talks was held in Singapore, but broke down at the end of August 1988 after disagreement arose over the amount payable by the Soviets for a further twelve month period of access to the EEZ. Vanuatu apparently demanded as much as, if not more than, the US$1.5m paid in 1987.
Prime Minister Lini remained confident, saying that ‘it looks as if the Soviet Union is determined to be in the region’\(^3\). However, his qualification of that statement must have been regarded with concern in some quarters: ‘I don’t think they would be satisfied with just fishing agreements, they want some facilities, missions’\(^4\). A further round of talks in Sydney produced little in the way of progress; Vanuatu was still insistent upon a large lump sum, whereas the Soviet Union was keen on a smaller initial payment followed by a per tonne rate to be paid on fish caught under the agreement.

While the chances of a Soviet fishing agreement with one of the small SPISs look less promising in early 1989 than they have in earlier years, the approach from previously critical quarters has moderated considerably. During the early months of the Vanuatu-USSR agreement, Australia’s Prime Minister had stated that he found ‘it difficult on the basis of Soviet activities around the world over the last couple of decades to accept that they would limit their interests to purely fishing’\(^5\). But, towards the end of that same year, Bill McKinnon, Australia’s High Commissioner in New Zealand, was saying that Soviet efforts to obtain fishing agreements with SPISs were going slowly\(^6\), and Foreign Minister Hayden commented in August 1987 that Soviet fishing activities to date in the South Pacific had been conducted in a proper fashion\(^7\).

A recent statement by Hayden’s successor, Gareth Evans, has confirmed this trend in Australia’s outlook. Soviet conduct in its fishing agreements with Kiribati and Vanuatu indicated nothing more than ‘a normal commercial relationship’. Moreover, said Evans, ‘the question of the Soviet presence in the South Pacific is less cause for alarm generally these days’\(^8\). Clearly, the Australian Government’s statements of warning in the past have not prevented the SPISs from considering and signing agreements with the USSR, and if continued, would run the risk of charges of hypocrisy given Australia’s own negotiations with the Soviet Union over fishing vessel access (see Ch.5).

Criticism of the Vanuatu-Soviet Union Agreement has not disappeared altogether, though. While former President George Sokomanu was correct in saying
that his country had not become a communist state after the Soviets had paid their access fees\textsuperscript{39}, questions remain over more subtle security implications stemming from the Soviet fishing presence.

While the greater interest shown by the USSR in renegotiating with Vanuatu than with Kiribati indicates that immediate fishing success is not the major determinant behind the proposals, it does point to the importance of port access. But if the Soviet Union did wish to base extensive South Pacific operations from Port Vila, be they fisheries, naval, space or otherwise, then the US$1.5m requested by Vanuatu (and rejected by the USSR) for renewal of such access would not seem to be an excessive investment. It is more likely that the "non-threatening" Soviet use of its access to Vanuatu’s ports during the agreement has increased the chances that other SPIS will agree to similar conditions in the future.

Another major cause for suspicion surrounds the Soviet request for access to Vanuatu by air. Unless the Soviets were planning to use Vanuatu as the centre for comprehensive South Pacific Island fishing operations, (a scenario not borne out by subsequent developments), the proposal for Aeroflot access was not consistent with the small number of vessels envisaged under the agreement. However, clumsy bureaucracy may have played a part here; EEZ, port and Aeroflot access appear to be the standard troika adopted by Sovrybflot in its proposals to any potential fishing agreement partner. In addition, Vanuatu’s favourable comments during the early stages of negotiation regarding the conditions of access may have encouraged such a forward Soviet negotiating position. Nonetheless, the Soviet Union’s persistent attempts to establish personnel on the ground in both Kiribati and Vanuatu (be it in the way of Aeroflot or fishing representatives and personnel), cannot be ignored. The possibility of Soviet hopes for influence in these countries of a very direct nature is not without precedent (See Ch.1).

The case for Soviet intelligence gathering and other military activities via fishing vessels operating under the agreement with Vanuatu, is not particularly convincing. Vanuatu is even further away from Kwajalein than is Kiribati and, because of this distance, vessels would need to spend most of their time outside the
Vanuatu EEZ if Kwajalein was to be a monitoring target. The collection of electronic intelligence from within the Vanuatu EEZ and even from inside its ports would appear to be a most unrewarding (and expensive) task: there is hardly a wealth of communications radiating from Port Vila!

But there are other possibilities to consider. Some American commentators have suggested that the Soviet fishing vessels would be used to map the ocean floor to enable future Soviet submarine operations in the area. However, there would appear to be little basis for especial Soviet submarine interest in Vanuatuan waters. More capable "research vessels" could accomplish such a task throughout the region without the necessity of payment to and approval from South Pacific Island States.

As early as 1981, Soviet offers to undertake seabed research for Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands were followed quickly by Australian counter-offers to map seabeds in the region.

Recently, the Soviet Union has again pushed for membership of the Committee for the Coordination of Offshore Prospecting in the South Pacific (CCOP/SOPAC), and has proposed dives by manned submersibles around New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga and PNG. While New Zealand was apparently prepared to allow dives off the North Island, Fiji’s refusal to consider the proposal has led to the withdrawal of the Soviet offer for 1989. Given that trouble has already been experienced with Soviet deep sea cruises in the South Pacific (the Soviets have not provided complete data from the voyages), further cooperation from regional states should proceed cautiously, if at all.

It has also been claimed that Soviet submarines would be supplied by the fishing vessels visiting Vanuatu’s ports under the agreement. This presupposes significant levels of Soviet submarine activity in the South Pacific; an assumption not borne out by the available evidence. Incidents involving such activity have tended to be shrouded in conjecture, rather than corroborated by firm evidence. The Kwajalein "nose cone" episode is based on no more than circumstantial evidence, and although a submarine located off the Cook Islands by an RNZAF Orion in February 1986 was
believed to be a Soviet naval vessel, the New Zealand Prime Minister attempted to cloud the issue with his statement that it might have been a ‘whale with flatulence’.

Interestingly, though, the latter sighting was followed on 11 March 1987 by the sighting of the Chumikan, a Soviet missile-range instrumentation vessel, 192km north-east of Aitutaki (Cook Islands). The Soviet Union’s satellite-related interest in the South Pacific cannot be described as minimal, but it is difficult to see an immediate application in this area arising from the Vanuatu-USSR fishing agreement. The most that can be said is that the Soviet-SPIS dialogue arising from the two fishing agreements to date may enable the Soviets to spread the veneer of legitimacy over future proposals.

As expected, the Soviets have not take kindly to suggestions that they sought and signed the agreement with Vanuatu for non-commercial reasons. Ambassador Samoteikin was very firm on this issue: ‘We have said we have no intention of establishing military bases here; no military agreements, no secret installations, no subversion, nothing. We need fish. We have 280 million people to feed....In our deal with Kiribati we strictly followed the terms’. Indeed, Dr Samoteikin’s superiors have done their best to ridicule suggestions of security implications involved with Soviet fishing; in giving his guarantee that Soviet fishing vessels would not be used for intelligence if allowed access to Australian ports, (see Ch. 5), Kamentsev said, ‘I want to assure you that no one fishing boat is equipped with any nuclear bomb or some superman spies’. After his 1987 visit to Australia, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze ridiculed the critics; ‘Beware, they say, Soviet fishermen in your waters may be followed by Soviet submersibles camouflaged as fishing boats’. Such sarcastic responses to serious concerns do little to dismiss suspicions that the Soviets are interested in more than access to marine resources.

The real answer probably lies with less obvious reasoning. Having gained port access and been careful not to make waves regionally by undertaking blatant non-fisheries activities, the USSR has improved its image in the South Pacific, and may hope that larger states in the area will be less reluctant to allow access for a variety of vessels in the future. For if Australia and Papua New Guinea can be encouraged to
believe that the Soviet Union has a legitimate and largely peaceful role to play in the South Pacific, then Soviet contacts with (and influence over) the smaller states can be increased via these larger regional powers.
1 D.J.Doulman, ‘The Kiribati-Soviet Union Fishing Agreement’, Pacific Viewpoint, 28,1, May 1987, p.30. PNG also endorsed Kiribati’s decision to sign the agreement.


3 A point made at the time by Doulman, D.J.Doulman, op.cit., p.35.

4 ibid. According to Gardner, the Soviets had approached Vanuatu at roughly the same time as they had Kiribati (late 1984); P.F.Gardner, ‘Tuna Poaching and Nuclear Testing in the South Pacific’, Orbis, Spring 1988, p.251.

5 Age, 1 April 1986, p.1.

6 ibid.

7 ibid. Sope’s comments should not only be contrasted with the eventual outcome - a rather different agreement - but also with the fact that Vanuatu is not a member of the Nauru Group of countries.


11 Age, 1 July 1986.

12 Sydney Morning Herald, 17 December 1986. Signing the protocols in Suva was Ambassador Dr E.M.Samoteikin.

13 Age, 12 December 1986. It is most interesting that Australia, one of the most worried over Kiribati’s and Vanuatu’s negotiations with the USSR, hosted talks which led to both agreements.

14 Australian, 16 December 1986.

15 ibid.


17 ibid.


20 ibid.

21 Age, 12 December 1986.

22 Figure given by the Vanuatu Foreign Minister, Donald Kalpokas, Pacific Report, No.9, July 21 1988, p.2.


26 ABC, South Pacific Bulletin, 10 April 1987.

27 The South Sea Digest, 3,7, 1 May 1987.


33 Pacific Report, No.14, 29 September 1988, p.3.
34 ibid.
35 Age, 9 March 1987.
38 Age, 10 October 1988,p.8. Evans was speaking in Washington DC during a joint meeting of the Asia Society and the World Affairs Council.
40 Among those suggesting such an application have been USN Admiral Lyons and the US Naval War College’s Alvin Bernstein; ABC, South Pacific Bulletin, 9 February 1987, 28 March 1987.
41 Age, 16 June 1981,p.3.
43 Islands Business, November 1988,p.42.
44 ABC, South Pacific Bulletin, 10 January 1989.
45 ibid.
49 Age, 28 January 1987,p.11.
50 Age, 7 July 1988,p.5.
51 Age, 9 March 1987,p.9.
CHAPTER 5: AUSTRALIA

Australia has not been a particularly happy hunting ground for Soviet fisheries negotiators. Since the mid-late 1970s the Soviet Union has made a series of proposals to Australian Governments to permit access for Soviet fishing vessels in Australian waters. Overall, Canberra has been unenthusiastic. The main exception to this pattern, when such access was being seriously considered by the Fraser Government in 1979, fell victim to the invasion of Afghanistan.

This reluctance to approve Soviet fisheries proposals has been based largely upon justified concern over the two main threats posed by the Soviet fishing fleet to Australian interests. Not only do Soviet fishing vessels carry with them potential threats to military security, but Australia’s overfished waters would not benefit from the presence of Soviet trawlers which have tended to be the "vacuum cleaners" of fishing.

Australia’s early experiences with the Soviet "fishing fleet" were not encouraging on either count. In February 1969, the "trawler" Van Gogh was not welcomed by domestic fishing operators off the north of the continent because it was initially thought to be ‘a fast, long-range trawler poaching on Australia’s rich prawn beds’1. Subsequent assessments revealed that the nature of the threat was rather different: the Van Gogh and the Prometuj, another Soviet vessel in the area, were later viewed by ‘Australian intelligence authorities’ as ‘Pueblo-type, electronic spy ships checking signals from and collecting data on vital defence bases in northern Australia’2.

These dual concerns have meant that the Soviets have not been and are unlikely to be granted access to the fishing stocks within the 200 nautical mile Australian Fishing Zone (AFZ) on a commercial basis. In response to this, the Soviet Union has made a number of proposals which seek to bypass this restriction; eg for research fishing and access for Soviet fishing vessels which operate outside the AFZ. What follows, then, is an analysis of Soviet efforts in this regard and of Australia’s
responses to such requests over the past decade. The Soviet proposal before the Australian Government in the middle of 1989, which relates to the servicing of Soviet vessels in Australian ports, will be examined in detail.


On 10 April 1978, the Australian Deputy Prime Minister, Anthony, met with Soviet Deputy Prime Minister, Smelyakov in Canberra and provided details on Australia’s new resource policy under the AFZ3. It is clear that the Soviets were interested in framing a proposal acceptable under these new circumstances. As with the establishment of New Zealand’s EEZ, the Australian Fishing Zone opened the way for the official recognition of a Soviet fisheries presence. Only a month earlier, the Federal Government had been approached by a Victorian company specialising in Australian-USSR trade, (Commercial Bureau Australia, Pty Ltd) to grant fishing rights for an estimated A$100m a year industry. Among the list of proposed participants was V/O Sovrybflot. During the early stages of the operation, use was to be made of Soviet fishing crews and of the Soviet market for the harvesting and the sale of the catch respectively4.

Soviet offers proliferated over the ensuing months and by September 1979, two fishing feasibility studies proposed by the USSR were ‘under active consideration by the Commonwealth and the relevant states’5. In December of that year, the Australian Government agreed in principle to allow Soviet fishing trials, limited to 10,000 tonnes of fish, until June 19806. This was to involve three Black Sea based Soviet trawlers and one mother ship conducting the trials south of Australia, and access for these vessels to Australian ports for refuelling and repair7. This constituted the first stage of a two-stage proposal; the latter showing marked similarity to Soviet proposals regarding Nelson in 1984 and Australia and New Zealand in 1988/9.

Under the second stage, the Australian-Soviet consortium, consisting of Henry Jones (IXL) Ltd, Commercial Bureau Australia and V/O Sovrybflot8, would apply to
the Federal Government to grant access for Soviet fisheries vessels, crew and aircraft. If such approval was granted, a new floating dock from the Black Sea was to be purchased by the consortium (for approximately A$10m\(^9\) and towed to Hobart. That city would then become ‘the main port for the Soviet Antarctic fleet’\(^10\). An estimate given in 1988, refers to at least 80 Soviet vessels using the facility each year\(^11\).

The extent of Soviet access to Hobart would have been considerable under the proposal. Not only would the task of repairing and revictualling Soviet fishing vessels be carried out there. Accommodation would be required in the form of a compound for at least 100 Soviet fishing personnel. The granting of landing rights to Aeroflot for regular charter flights to the Tasmanian capital\(^12\) was also proposed. The potential surveillance task for Australia would have been extensive.

An estimate of the size of the Soviet Antarctic fishing fleet at 200 vessels\(^13\) may have been the cause for financial optimism on the part of the regions which had hoped to service the vessels (either the West Australian seabord or Tasmania). But suggestions that the Soviet fleet was to be concentrated around Macquarie Island\(^14\) are difficult to reconcile with the low level of Soviet fisheries activity in the Pacific sector of Antarctic waters (see Ch.1). As will be seen later in this chapter, Soviet fisheries proposals have continued along these lines. Soviet representatives have made promises of commercial benefits to apply pressure on the Federal Government via interested state administrations and private business interests, but have remained vague about the viability of the actual fishing operations envisaged. (As Chapter Two has shown, the same also applies to the Soviet proposals to New Zealand).

The refusal of the Fraser Government on 9 January 1980 ‘to meet or consider Soviet requests’ regarding direct USSR-Australian Aeroflot flights and the entry of Aeroflot officers into Australia\(^15\) did not augur well for a long term Soviet fisheries presence in Australia. Stage 2 of the proposal was unlikely to proceed without this essential precondition. However, it was the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan which dealt the fatal blow to any chances of a 1980 fisheries access agreement.

The similarity between and coordination of the New Zealand and Australian
responses to Afghanistan is obvious here. The January 1980 suspension of the proposed visit to Australia by a Soviet fisheries delegation, of research vessel visits to Australian ports and, most significantly, of the consideration of the joint venture agreements with Tasmania and West Australia, destroyed the possibility of Soviet access in the short term just as local momentum was building up in support of the Soviet requests. Tasmanian Premier Lowe, who had earlier described the Hobart-based sevicing facility as the ‘most significant economic development in Tasmania for many years’, attacked the Afghanistan-inspired ban and claimed that it had cost Tasmania one thousand jobs.

Australia and New Zealand were also equally anxious to avoid self-imposed economic sacrifice. Suspension of the Soviet proposals affected promised, rather than actual, earnings. The Australian Government did cancel the upcoming Soviet cruise-ship season. (The 1979 season had seen twenty cruises to Australia by four Soviet ships). But the Soviet Union’s Far Eastern Shipping Company’s (FESCO) Pacific North West Service from Japan and the Baltic Australia Line between the European USSR, Europe and Australia were not affected. Hence Australia’s very favourable terms of trade with the USSR were permitted to continue.

The post-Afghanistan refusal to allow port calls by Soviet cruise and fishing vessels may have reduced potential threats to security in the Australian region, but the Australian Government could not deny the Soviets freedom of passage in and around Australian waters. The presence of dedicated Soviet intelligence collection vessels continued in the early 1980s. As per usual, Soviet ‘intelligence trawlers’ sat off the Australian coast during the 1981 (ANZUS) Kangaroo exercises staged near Rockhampton in Queensland. In 1982, the Soviets sent seven vessels to recover a ‘space capsule’ 300nm south of Cocos Island. Included in the flotilla were the naval missile-range-instrumentation vessel, Chumikan, a Krivak class guided missile frigate, the space support ship Kosmonaut Georgi Dobrovolsky and one AGI. (The Chumikan and K.G.Dobrovolsky also feature in Ch.2). Later that year, the Australian Government issued a formal complaint to the Soviet Union over the activities of a
Soviet research vessel, also off Cocos Island. The Antares carried out repairs in late August 1982, before it had sought the necessary permission from Cocos Island authorities to anchor and land crew on the Australian territory.

The years 1981-1984 were relatively quiet ones for the USSR-Australian fisheries relationship. Although Prime Minister Hawke announced the lifting of the "Afghanistan bans" on March 18,1983, prospects for an agreement during the early months of the new Labor Government could not have been enhanced by the expulsion from Australia of Soviet First Secretary, Valery Ivanov in April 1983, and the downing of Flight KAL007 in September of the same year. An Australian trade delegation led by Trade Secretary Scully did, however, visit Moscow in October 1983 for a meeting of the Mixed Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation. The Soviets were obviously keen on restoring fisheries to the agenda and made a new request for Soviet research vessel access to the AFZ.

Indeed, the Soviet Union had renewed its efforts to gain support from Australian state governments, with offers being made to at least three states. However, the proposals to Tasmania and New South Wales became casualties of the Ivanov affair and the West Australian Cabinet rejected the Soviet proposal on security grounds. The latter was due mainly to the proximity of the proposed servicing facilities to HMAS Stirling, a regular port of call for both Australian and American naval vessels. This proposal was another Elders IXL-Sovrybflot effort and was put to the West Australian Government in mid-1984. Options included the offer of low interest loans to the West Australian Government for the construction of dry dock facilities or the installation of a Soviet-built dry dock. The flexibility shown by the Soviets at this time is quite exceptional; they appeared to be unconcerned as to which centre became the HQ for their Antarctic operations; be it Hobart, Perth or Sydney!

But the Australian Federal Government was obviously willing to consider Soviet fisheries access just one step at a time. As in 1979, the first such step was the agreement in principle in March 1987 to allow Soviet research fishing near Heard and McDonald Islands in Australia’s Antarctic territory. However, the viability of the fisheries resources in the area was as doubtful as it had ever been\(^\text{29}\), and it is possible that the Soviets viewed this initial access as a useful foot in the door (just as they viewed Kiribati as a step to Vanuatu).

Overall, though, 1987 was a year of warming Soviet-Australian relations. Against the background of "changed international circumstances" (see Ch.2), the visit by a Soviet delegation to Australia in October 1987 signalled a more intensive trading relationship between the two countries\(^\text{30}\). The trip by PM Hawke and Foreign Minister Hayden to the Soviet Union later that month not only confirmed this trend, but gave the Soviet authorities the opportunity to press claims for a comprehensive fishing agreement to the most senior levels of the Australian Government\(^\text{31}\). Since that time, bilateral fishing negotiations and the proposals involved have been the focus of considerable attention and debate.

In the last week of April 1988, a delegation led by Soviet Deputy Minister Kudryavtsev visited Canberra and presented the latest version of the proposed fisheries package. As reported in ‘Australian Fisheries’, the proposals included;

(i) a ‘Government to Government agreement on fisheries co-operation’,
(ii) ‘access to a port for USSR fishing vessels operating in southern waters for purposes of repair, revictualling and crew changes’,
(iii) ‘access to an Australian airport for Aeroflot charter flights for crew changeover purposes only’,
(iv) ‘commercial research in the AFZ, utilising USSR trawlers operating off the north western, western and south western coasts’\(^\text{32}\). The original request involved two such vessels\(^\text{33}\), with Australian observers onboard if required\(^\text{34}\).
(v) ‘commercial arrangements for landing Soviet caught fish to Australian processors’,
(vi) ‘continuation of scientific research in the AFZ adjacent to Heard and McDonald Islands’.

65
Islands’.

Estimates of the number of Soviet fisheries personnel annually involved in the proposal have ranged from 4500 to 9000, with the latter figure likely to be more accurate. For although the figure of fifty Soviet vessels making use of the servicing/crew changeover facilities has been quoted repeatedly, under Soviet law the crews on fishing vessels must be changed every six months. Hence each vessel would make at least two visits to an Australian port per year. With estimates of the average crew size per vessel ranging from 60 to 80, between 12000 and 16000 Soviet fisheries personnel would pass through Australia each year.

Whatever the true figure, the demands on the Australian security community would be substantial. As Hayden noted in 1987, the Australian Government already devotes ‘a great number of highly skilled (personnel) and some very expensive resources’ to make sure that the activities of Soviet personnel in Australia are ‘properly monitored’ and that their movements are ‘circumscribed’. This effort will not only be complicated by the presence of such a large number of fisheries personnel, but also by Soviet citizens involved in the 25 Aeroflot flights which would take place each year between the USSR and Australia. The accusation made by Victorian Federal MP, Ken Aldred, that the manager of Aeroflot’s Sydney ticket office, Mr Vladimir Podshipov, was suspected of being a GRU major, has not served to reduce apprehensions over the issue of Aeroflot access.

According to the Australian representative of the USSR Register of Shipping, Ian Cox, the rationale behind the Soviet Union’s request for a servicing facility and fishing vessel and air access, is purely an economic one. Not only are Soviet southern ocean fishing operations moving to the areas around Heard and McDonald Islands, but having vessels based from an Australian port would involve substantial savings over the current practice of using Singapore. Yet neither argument is particularly convincing. Heard and McDonald Islands do not sit astride the major Antarctic fisheries resources and ‘Singapore remains the cheapest major ship-repair center in the world’. While the Soviet Union may save a certain amount in the long term if they
were to use Australia instead of Singapore (via reduced steaming times and distances), it is not at all certain that the figure of A$50m per annum (at a net saving of $1m per year for each of the 50 Soviet vessels\textsuperscript{47}) is entirely accurate. The establishment of such an operation will incur significant costs for the USSR even if these are shared with Australian industries, especially if the costs of building, moving and installing a dry dock are included.

The other side of the financial equation - the input to the local economy - may appear attractive to state administrations. Alongside total Australian trade with the Soviet Union, it would not make a massive contribution to the Australian economy. At the quoted fee of A$200,000 per port call\textsuperscript{48}, up to A$20m per annum would be generated for the Government. However, the latter would need to spend a substantial portion of that income on additional surveillance precautions. Hence it would be in the wider economic relationship with the Soviet Union by way of increasing Australian access to Soviet markets, that any undeniable economic benefit will arise for Australia. Promises relating to employment creation in the region servicing the fleet are just that (promises) and cannot be tested until well after any agreement is signed.

That very signing will not occur before an extensive set of bilateral negotiations have taken place. After details of the Soviet proposals were made public in May 1988\textsuperscript{49}, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade took a draft submission from his Department to Cabinet which, on June 16, decided in principle to continue fisheries negotiations with the Soviets\textsuperscript{50}. The submission had apparently suggested that further such negotiations were required before an accurate analysis of the commercial and security implications was possible\textsuperscript{51}.

The visit to Australia of Vladimir Kamentsev early the following month was not only the occasion for some timely propaganda from the Soviet Deputy Prime Minister, but also gave the Australian Government an opportunity to press for a more comprehensive economic relationship between the two countries. In meetings with no less than four Australian Departments\textsuperscript{52}, Kamentsev was told that the Australian acceptance and signing of the proposed fishing agreement was dependent upon
improved access for Australian commodities to the Soviet market\textsuperscript{53}. Kamentsev later agreed that 'we have to show we can be beneficial to both sides'\textsuperscript{54}.

The bilateral negotiations process has not only been extended by these Australian conditions, but also by Soviet inconsistency over its requests for fishing access. In early November, the Minister for Trade Negotiations informed a Federal ALP caucus meeting that the Soviet Union had proposed during the Moscow-based first round of Australian-Soviet negotiations in September 1988, that between six and eight feasibility fishing vessels be allowed to fish in the AFZ. This was a significant increase on the original proposal for two such vessels\textsuperscript{55}. This new suggestion brings into question Soviet intentions and seriousness in the whole process as it precipitated the very predictable Australian response that this level of "research" fishing would endanger already over-exploited fisheries\textsuperscript{56}. The need for such a substantial presence in the AFZ is difficult to explain, although the Soviets may have seen it as a way to press their case for full-scale commercial fishing access to the AFZ (ie similar to their arrangement with New Zealand). As a result of this new request, fisheries negotiations were in a state of 'suspended animation'\textsuperscript{57} in late 1988/early 1989, until the resumption of talks on the issue was announced in February\textsuperscript{58}.

This second round of negotiations took place in Canberra from February 27 (1989). With the apparent concurrence of the Soviets to drop the 6-8 vessel claim, the draft texts of two agreements covering fisheries and commodities were drawn up. At the time of writing, these drafts were under consideration by both the Soviet and the Australian Federal Governments\textsuperscript{59}. It is clear that the latter will not sign the fisheries agreement unless progress on the access to the Soviet Union for Australian commodities is forthcoming. On the fisheries front, the first year of Soviet access is likely to be restricted to the two feasibility fishing vessels which, according to one report, 'will carry three biologists and a surveyor from Australia and will share information gained'\textsuperscript{60}. Access for the servicing, supply and crew replacement of the non-AFZ Soviet vessels is thus unlikely to occur before 1991, although it is obvious that the USSR would like to obtain this sooner rather than later. Vladimir Ikrianov, the
Soviet Fisheries Ministry’s ‘deputy chief of external relations’ has invited Australian journalists to board Soviet fishing vessels and check for ‘spying equipment’\textsuperscript{61}.

The debate over security implications,

While negotiating fishing access as part of an overall package will improve the net financial gain for Australia, it may tend to push security concerns to the background as the attractiveness of those commercial benefits becomes more prominent. In the event of a fishing agreement allowing access to Australian ports and airports it would be interesting to learn of the relative importance placed by the Australian Government on (a) reports by the intelligence and security community doubting the legitimacy of Soviet fishing activities, and (b) the improving levels of Australian-Soviet trade.

Although it has been reported that the ‘strategic element’ of Soviet fishing access to Australia has already been settled within the Australian Federal Government\textsuperscript{62}, it is most unlikely that the last has been heard of public debate on the security questions. Despite the Fraser Government’s receptive attitude towards similar Soviet offers a decade ago, the Federal Opposition has been quick to point out possible dangers involved in access for the Soviet fishing fleet. The Leader of the Opposition, John Howard, has gone so far as to say that ‘this proposal completely undermines the basis of strategic denial’\textsuperscript{63}.

By far the most comprehensive Parliamentary critique has come from Ken Aldred, Member of Parliament for Bruce. In a May 1988 House of Representatives debate, Aldred warned of the intelligence and wartime activities of both the Soviet fishing fleet and Aeroflot\textsuperscript{64}. While his claim that the Soviets could use Okean Class AGIs in its research fishing in the AFZ is open to doubt (and would not go unnoticed by the Australian Defence forces), his statement rates as one of the more pertinent contributions to Hansard in 1988.
Additional criticism has been made by two former ASIO Directors General, Alan Wrigley\textsuperscript{65} and Harvey Barnett, with the latter concerned over the possibility of the Soviet Union using "a fishing fleet based say in Hobart or another Australian port...to service an on-going intelligence operation in Australia"\textsuperscript{66}.

Michael O'Connor has launched attacks on the debate itself; saying that the Australian-centric focus has ignored the key issue, namely the use of the Soviet vessels 'to discover through oceanographic research suitable operating conditions and havens for Soviet submarines in Australia's southern and western approaches'\textsuperscript{67}. This, however, would appear to apply mainly to the Soviet research fishing vessels operating within the Australian fishing Zone under the first stage of the agreement. The Australian Government has refused to allow access for more than two such vessels (see above). O'Connor's argument does not explain the main thrust of the Soviet effort; to gain a servicing facility and access for vessels which will spend the bulk of their time operating in fishing grounds outside Australia's 200 mile zone. Moreover, O'Connor does not explain the strategic significance of Soviet submarine operations in these waters.

Despite these claims, it is likely that the major security concern involved with the proposed agreement will continue to be the introduction of Aeroflot access to Australia. However, the Soviet airline may gain an Australian presence irrespective of the results of fisheries negotiations. Ansett already has an agreement with Aeroflot Cargo Express, a joint Soviet-Australian concern, under which freight from Australia will connect with overseas Aeroflot flights\textsuperscript{68}. The Soviet Union is also aiming to establish direct charter flights between Australia and the USSR during the months of July, August and December, and has already held talks with Australian aviation officials on this matter\textsuperscript{69}.

At the fishing vessel level, access to Australia raises wider questions about security than in the case of New Zealand because of the relative importance of Australia to the Western Alliance. Australia's continuing close relationship with the United States involves vital security assets and interests on Australian soil and in
Australian ports. An agreement allowing Soviet fishing access to the Fremantle or Sydney areas would be worrying in the context of United States naval port visits to these places.

Soviet merchant vessels already have regular access to several Australian ports, with over 250 visits to Australian ports by Soviet cargo vessels in 1987 alone. It does not follow however that the presence of an additional 50 vessels per annum can be discounted as unimportant. The simultaneous presence of American naval units, RAN vessels, and Soviet merchant and fishing vessels in a rapidly escalating crisis would not be a pleasant mixture. In this situation it would not be easy for Australia to ‘keep sufficient forces available to track and target all militarily useful Soviet state-owned vessels’. These vessels could providing ESM (Electronic Support Measures) data to Soviet naval headquarters, thus dooming Western assets at the outbreak of a conflict. In addition, it is possible that the Soviet “civilian” fleet could use tactical High Frequency analysis and jamming as part of a coordinated effort whereby ‘Australian military HF communications would be completely disrupted without one act of physical aggression in Australia’.

The use of Soviet fishing vessels to transport Spetsnaz agents en route to the sabotage of military assets on Australian soil, especially of the Nurrungar joint facility which supplies vital Early Warning information regarding the nuclear intention of the Soviet Union, may appear to belong to the realm of fantasy. But uncertainty over the size and type of Soviet fishing vessels included in the access proposal does not serve to rule out such possible applications. In particular, if the vessels are similar to the Soviet krill trawler seen in New Zealand (the 114m, 6392GRW tonne More Lazareva), the potential to transport operatives in many configurations is worthy of consideration. The storage capacity and trawl ramp would not appear to be completely unsuitable for operations involving submersibles and a close watch on these vessels by the appropriate authorities would be essential in times of crisis.

The Australian Government’s reaction to these concerns has been decidedly low-key. While, in Hayden’s words, ‘Australian national interests, in particular
security concerns’ may have been ‘paramount in the Government’s mind’75, during the consideration of the Soviet proposals, this has not been evident in the Government’s public record on the issue. Hayden has accused John Howard of a ‘hysterical relapse into Cold War rhetoric’76, and has described the proposed fisheries agreement as a ‘fairly inefficient way of putting spies into operation’77. However, while Hayden did apparently accept Kamentsev’s guarantee that no spies would be onboard the Soviet fishing vessels entering Australian ports, he has said that the Soviets ‘certainly will pick up information if they can’78.

Defence Minister Beazley has added weight to the Government’s argument that the Soviet vessels gaining access to Australian ports and facilities are unlikely to be carrying extensive electronics fits. In a response to a Parliamentary question he stated carefully: ‘If the honourable member is talking about intelligence gathering vessels, they are usually pretty easy to pick. They stand outside ports from which American warships operate. They look like fishing vessels but sticking off them are a series of antennae that make them pretty easy to discover, if one had the inclination to do so. They do not normally hover around with fishing fleets’79. However, the honourable member (John Spender), was not asking for information on dedicated AGIs, but rather on standard Soviet fishing vessels.

This points to the crux of the matter to which the Australian Government has not done justice publicly. Soviet proposals for extensive access to Australia will never result in one of the greatest economic successes stories for the USSR. What are then the secondary Soviet motives in seeking an agreement with Australia? The answer will depend on; (i) the types of Soviet fishing vessels which will use the Australian servicing facilities, (ii) the port(s) finally chosen for those facilities and (iii) the paths of entry to and exit from Australian waters by the Soviet vessels.

What is clear is that a fishing agreement with Australia presents the Soviet Union with the best opportunity in the region to carry out the fishing fleet’s second agenda. In South Pacific terms, Australia is the big fish. The relative military importance of Australia gives the USSR a good reason for wanting additional civil
vessel coverage. In addition, Australia’s leadership role in the region is likely to be less detrimental to Soviet interests if the Australian Government signs a fishing agreement and allows access for Soviet fishing vessels and for Aeroflot. Soviet prestige and opportunities for influence in the region will be enhanced, (probably at the expense of those of the United States). All of this will do much for the overriding Soviet goal in this area of the world, namely, the drive for political legitimacy.
Observer, 16 February 1969.

ibid. See also Sunday Times (London), 16 February 1969. The Observer report also mentions United States concern over electronic security of the Polaris communications facilities at NW Cape and 'Manus Island'.


Age, 4 March 1978, p. 29.

According to Senator Webster, the Minister Representing the Minister for Primary Industry, Australian Financial Review, 27 September 1979, p. 5.

Age, 5 January 1980.

ibid.

Note the similarity here to the 1978 proposing team.


Age, 5 January 1980.

Canberra Times, 7 July 1988.


Age, 5 January 1980.

ibid.


ibid.

Age, 5 January 1980.


Age, 15 February 1980.


Canberra Times, 21 October 1981. (The Soviet vessel was collecting communications signals).

Canberra Times, 7 June 1982. An Australian version of New Zealand's Kosmonaut Dobrovolskij experience (see Ch. 2), occurred at the end of 1976. The 697 tonne hydrographic research vessel, the Valeria Uryvayev was anchored at Scott Reef, 290 km northwest of West Australia's Yampi Sound for a week in December/January 1976/7 and was refused permission to enter an Australian port due to the nature of onboard electronic equipment. The vessel was kept under RAAF Orion surveillance during its visit to the region. Sydney Morning Herald, 5 January 1977, p. 11.

Age, 22 September 1982, p. 5.

Canberra Times, March 19, 1983.

Age, 23 April 1983. Ivanov was the first Soviet diplomat to be expelled from Australia since 1963.


Ian Cox was also involved in the consultations, and expressed his astonishment at the WA Government's rejection of the proposal, taking a similar stance in 1988 (see below). Age, 15 June 1985.

ibid.

According to the Age, 'the Government does not believe there are enough fish in the area'. Age, 18 March 1987, p. 19.

Age, 21 October 1987, p. 3.

See Age, 17 June 1988, p. 17.
32 Australian Fisheries, June 1988, p.11.
33 Canberra Times, 5 November 1988, p.6.
34 Australian, 2 May 1988, p.3.
35 Australian Fisheries, June 1988, p.11.
36 Age, 16 June 1988, p.18.
41 As given in the 1988 Soviet proposal to New Zealand, see Chapter 2.
43 The figure stated by Valery Morozov, First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Australia, Mercury, 11 May 1988.
44 See Age, 2 September 1988, p.5.
45 Australian, 3 May 1988, p.3.
46 Far Eastern Economic Review, 16 February 1988, p.44.
47 Australian, 5 July 1988, p.4.
48 Australian, 2 May 1988, p.3.
49 ibid. For an official response, see Prime Minister Hawke’s comments in the House of Representatives; Australia, Parliament, House of Representatives, Hansard, 18 May 1988, p.2529.
50 Age, 17 June 1988, p.17.
52 On July 7, Kamentsev met with Prime Minister Hawke, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Hayden, the Minister for Trade Negotiations, Duffy and the Minister for Primary Industries, Kerin. Age, 6 July 1988, p.5.
53 ibid. See also Canberra Times, 6 July 1988, p.7.
54 Age, 7 July 1988, p.5.
56 Ibid.
57 The words of Soviet Embassy representative, Valery Zemskov, Age, 8 December 1988.
61 Canberra Times, 3 March 1989, p.5.
64 Australia, House of Representatives, Hansard, 19 May 1988, pp.2646-2651.


See ibid., Australian, 10 February 1989, p. 4.


CHAPTER 6: OTHER SOUTH PACIFIC STATES

Just as the Soviet Union's efforts in the South Pacific have not been concentrated solely upon access for its fishing vessels, proposals regarding the latter have not been restricted to the four countries (Kiribati, Vanuatu, New Zealand and Australia) specifically covered in this thesis. Because of the Soviet penchant for making numerous attention-seeking offers in the fisheries realm, it cannot be said with certainty that each and every instance recorded below indicates a serious attempt at gaining a fishing agreement, let alone to catch fish! At the same time, the lack of success experienced by the Soviet Union in the region prior to 1985 would suggest that a positive response from almost any Pacific Island country to a Soviet fishing initiative would be followed up in some way by the USSR.

The Soviet Union has been making approaches to SPIS over fisheries access for well over a decade now. Early attempts included an offer to the Kingdom of Tonga in 1976, when the apparent willingness of the Tongan Government to consider Soviet requests for access caused great consternation among the ANZUS states and was followed by substantial increases in financial aid from these countries (to Tonga). In general, though, Soviet approaches in the late 1970s and early 1980s did not elicit favourable responses from South Pacific Island governments. The newly independent small states tended to be staunchly anti-communist and toed the western line. For their part the Soviets did little to help their chances with their unfinished, heavy-handed diplomacy and performance in such places as Afghanistan.

But as South Pacific Island States became less apprehensive about Soviet initiatives in the region, the Western fisheries presence was having an opposite effect. This was particularly evident in the case of the American Tunaboat Association. Kiribati, then, was not the only SPIS in 1985 for whom an agreement with the USSR was appealing nor was it the lone radical state in an American lake of conformists.
Before the Soviets were able to find a willing partner in Kiribati, they had approached Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Western Samoa for similar fishing access agreements. The contrast between American performance and Soviet promise was presented starkly in the case of the Solomons. The harsh American response to the Jeanette Diana incident (see Ch.3) led to United States vessels being banned from fishing in the Solomon Islands' Exclusive Economic Zone and prompted the Solomon Islands Government to issue 'an open invitation to the Soviet Union for negotiations on fishing rights, a proposal it had previously rejected.'

However, the real acceleration in Soviet efforts seems to have occurred after the signing of the Kiribati agreement. In addition to proposals to and eventual success with Vanuatu, the USSR has concentrated upon PNG, Fiji and, to a lesser extent, Tonga since that time.

A visit by Soviet Ambassador Samoteikin to Suva in March 1986 was later revealed to have included discussions on possible Soviet fishing access to Fiji. The visit coincided quite nicely with the first Soviet cruise liner to call on Fiji after the lifting of the Afghanistan-inspired ban by the Mara Government. At the Honolulu meeting of the Standing Committee of the Pacific Island Conference in July 1986, the Fiji Prime Minister cast caution to the wind by announcing that Fiji was now prepared to negotiate a fisheries agreement with the USSR, provided that payment for access was sufficient, and raised the possibility of shore facilities for Soviet fishing vessels. Given Fiji's central political and geographical position in the region and subsequent internal political developments, any such moves would have wide significance.

Even if Mara's comments were partially attention-seeking, Soviet interest in an agreement with Fiji was understandably stimulated. At the time of the Fiji Prime Minister's statement, the Third Secretary of the Soviet Union's Canberra Embassy, Vladimir Valkov, said that the offer made to Fiji at the end of 1984 was still standing. By September, a Soviet delegation was in Fiji for trade talks which included the topic of fisheries cooperation between the two countries. In December
1986, Samoteikin stated that with the Vanuatu agreement close to conclusion, the USSR was now ready to enter negotiations with Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Solomon Islands. Included in the Soviet proposals to Fiji was a direct Aeroflot route between Suva and Moscow.

Tonga's Foreign Affairs and Defence Minister Crown Prince Tupouto'a visited Moscow in February 1986. Soviet officials raised the possibility of a fisheries agreement between the two countries. Yet, according to lists drawn up by the Forum Fisheries Agency, Tonga did not license a single FFV to fish in its EEZ in the 1986/7 period! Tonga's domestic tuna fleet consists of but one longliner operating out of Nuku'alofa. A Soviet trade delegation which visited Tonga in April 1988 included an official from the Soviet Ministry of Fisheries. Judging on past performance, it is most likely that the offer of a fisheries agreement was made to Tonga. In the past the Soviet Ministry of Fisheries may have had excuses for seeking such an agreement. But the need to dispose of excess fishing vessel capacity, and the Ministry's lack of knowledge of the fisheries potential in individual Pacific Island EEZs are not convincing explanations in the late 1980s (if they ever were). An agreement with Tonga cannot be justified on a commercial basis, and it would stretch the imagination to the point of breaking to believe that Soviet negotiators were unaware of this fact.

But the major prize among the regional states is undoubtedly Papua New Guinea. Soviet efforts to gain a fishing agreement with PNG (which can be much more easily justified on commercial grounds given the relative richness of PNG waters) have been coupled with moves to establish an embassy in Port Morseby. Especially in the post-Fiji coup environment, where Fiji's claims to regional political centrality, let alone leadership, have been shaken, the USSR's aim to reach small SPISs via Papua New Guinea (and Australia) is to be taken as a serious challenge to the balance of friendships in the South Pacific.

In August 1986, the PNG Foreign Minister, Legu Vagi, announced that he had asked the Forum Fisheries Agency to begin fisheries negotiations for PNG with several Distant Water Fishing Nations, including the Soviet Union. This apparently
A unilateral move came more than eighteen months after the late 1984 Soviet offers to PNG and numerous other states in the region. By early 1987, an official PNG Government paper was presented to Cabinet setting out costs and benefits involved in a fisheries agreement with the Soviet Union. Deputy Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan stated at the time that an Australian company representing Soviet interests had already approached PNG to negotiate fisheries access. Sir Julius later denied that he had contemplated access to PNG waters by licensed Soviet vessels and said that the USSR had not made proposals to that effect.

It was clear, though, that a PNG-USSR fisheries agreement was a distinct (if rather distant) possibility and Soviet representatives were making favourable noises on this issue. The Soviet Naval Attache in Tokyo, Captain Nikolai Usov, stated in February 1984 that the Soviet Union would be keen to sign a fishing agreement with Papua New Guinea.

However, it was not until after the expiry of the USSR-Vanuatu agreement that a Soviet focus on gaining a significant presence in PNG became noticeable. At the start of his first official visit to PNG in March 1988, Ambassador Samoteikin indicated the Soviet Union’s interest in assisting with the development of PNG’s fishing and other industries. The USSR then made a formal request to the PNG Government for an embassy in Port Morseby, and Samoteikin’s visit was followed by a trade delegation in April (as per Tonga this included an official from the Ministry of Fisheries). Later in March, Sir Julius repeated PNG’s willingness to consider a fisheries agreement with the Soviets as long as a ‘code of fair play’ was adhered to.

While it has been stressed that the PNG Government will allow a Soviet fishing and diplomatic presence only under firm constraints, the agreement in principle by the Namaliu Cabinet to permit the establishment of the Soviet Embassy may be the harbinger of glad tidings for the USSR. Papua New Guinea may well have strong and valuable ties with neighbouring Australia. But this does not mean that it is willing to subordinate its own outlook and course of action to any and every
perceived western community of effort. This in turn may serve to provide new openings for the Soviet Union. According to Michael Somare, the Foreign Minister of the Namaliu Government, 'there is no point in criticising a Pacific country for signing a fishing deal with the Soviet Union if the critics are not doing anything in the region'.

Papua New Guinea's stature in the South Pacific is such that any criticism of a USSR-PNG fishing agreement is likely to rebound very negatively upon the not-so-larger critics. Indeed, the Soviets will not be doing their own cause any harm if they support a stronger regional leadership role for Papua New Guinea.

The Soviet Union's chances for an agreement with Papua New Guinea may have been enhanced by the problems encountered by Pacific Island countries with Japan's tuna fleet. The Japanese position on licensing arrangements and fees (in particular the continuing refusal to sign a multilateral fishing agreement) has caused a similar breakdown in relations as was experience with the United States in the early-mid 1980s. The omnipresent Ambassador Samoteikin visited the Forum Fisheries Agency in April 1989 and an official Soviet delegation (including Ministry of Fisheries officials from Vladivostok) will visit Honiara later in 1989 for talks on commercial fishing. According to Samoteikin, the USSR is now interested in the marine triangle between Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. Soviet interest in South Pacific fisheries, despite the poor catches off Kiribati and Vanuatu, is destined to continue for some time.
5 Pacific Islands Monthly, March 1986.
8 Age, 19 September 1986.
9 Sydney Morning Herald, 17 December 1986.
15 Australian, 29 August 1986.
19 ibid.
23 Legu Vagi stated in 1986 Papua New Guinea's desire that Soviet access in the Pacific be restricted to specified ports in order to assist surveillance, Australian, 29 August 1986. PNG has set up an interdepartmental committee to consider internal security implications of the proposed Soviet diplomatic presence, including restrictions on movements within PNG by Soviet diplomats, ABC, South Pacific Bulletin, 17 January 1989.
26 See the comments of FFA Director, Philip Muller, ABC, South Pacific Bulletin, 5 April 1989. There is substantial similarity between Japan's damaging practices and image in the South Pacific in 1989 and those of the ATA earlier in the decade.
CONCLUSION.

There is no doubt that Soviet fishing has been one of the most visible spheres of activity by the Soviet Union in the South Pacific. Despite the many warnings issued on the dangers in allowing access for the Soviet fishing fleet, the vessels involved appear to have posed few direct threats to the security of South Pacific countries. If major coups in the intelligence collection and other security fields have fallen to the Soviets, descriptions of them do not appear on the public record.

Hence, the critics of work such as this would say, the fuss surrounding Soviet fishing activity in the South Pacific region has all been for nought. The Soviets want fish, we want their money, everyone is happy. Certainly the threat posed by Soviet fishing vessels can be and has been exaggerated in some quarters, (although this is usually in the form of highlighting one threat at the expense of all others). But there are still serious questions regarding the true objectives behind Soviet fishing in the South Pacific which demand attention.

The commercial viability of Soviet fishing, be it in the waters of New Zealand, Vanuatu, Kiribati or Antarctic waters, is one such area of doubt. If economic success is the benchmark for Soviet fisheries development in the era of perestroika, then clearly further Soviet efforts around the Pacific Island countries (at least) should not be expected. Unless, of course other goals are served by such a fisheries presence. It needs to be remembered, for example, that the fishing fleet has established access to ports not available to, and spends time in waters not frequented by, the Soviet Navy. It thus carries (at least potential) intelligence collection and wartime capabilities into previously uncovered (if relatively unimportant) areas.

Thanks to a few million dollars, years of diplomacy and careful control of small fishing fleets, the Soviet Union now has a far more legitimate image in the South Pacific. It has an attentive audience to its fisheries proposals. With the promise of easy money in financially challenging times, it has a means to apply leverage to governments in the region. The prospects for increasing Soviet influence on regional
decision-making and for reducing the role of other external powers in the South Pacific have been enhanced.

Soviet fishing activities in this region may have been most unsuccessful in terms of catches and financial return. There is no question however that the fundamental interests of the Soviet state have been furthered. This, rather than the purloining of military secrets, has been the main task for the fishing fleet in the South Pacific region.
APPENDICES.

TABLE 1.1: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC AREA TO SOVIET AND WORLD FISHERIES.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UN FAO AREA Description</th>
<th>YEAR 1983</th>
<th>YEAR 1984</th>
<th>YEAR 1985</th>
<th>YEAR 1986</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>568000*</td>
<td>584300</td>
<td>571500</td>
<td>733500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-W Pacific.</td>
<td>0.83*</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.95*</td>
<td>10.83</td>
<td>11.47</td>
<td>20.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71+77 W+E Central Pacific.</td>
<td>8045900</td>
<td>8483600</td>
<td>9030000</td>
<td>9297800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>11.51</td>
<td>12.02</td>
<td>11.57</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
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<td>87</td>
<td>6271100</td>
<td>8547100</td>
<td>9627000</td>
<td>11951900</td>
</tr>
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<td>S-E Pacific.</td>
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<td>11.60</td>
<td>12.81</td>
<td>14.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.81</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>6.49</td>
<td>5.95</td>
</tr>
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<td>88</td>
<td>10600</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>4700</td>
<td>3900</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pacific Antarctic.</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55.84</td>
<td>18.25</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>48.31</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>109700</td>
<td>35600</td>
<td>31300</td>
<td>37900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian O. Antarctic.</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67.02</td>
<td>66.47</td>
<td>90.38</td>
<td>84.21</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>307000</td>
<td>225200</td>
<td>228200</td>
<td>462000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic O. Antarctic.</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>96.50</td>
<td>76.71</td>
<td>82.36</td>
<td>86.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORLD TOTAL CATCH</td>
<td>68151900</td>
<td>73688700</td>
<td>75138000</td>
<td>80345000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Key:</td>
<td>56800:</td>
<td>Catch by all fleets in tonnes.</td>
<td>0.83:</td>
<td>Percentage of total world fishing catch.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(In tonnes).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Skipjack</th>
<th>Albacore</th>
<th>Yellowfin</th>
<th>Bigeye</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total as Percentage of total Soviet catch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1223</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>1282</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>2857</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>2168</td>
<td>1233</td>
<td>4401</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1404</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>3768</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>6042</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>1688</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>1851</td>
<td>1071</td>
<td>4610</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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### TABLE 1.3: SOVIET CATCHES IN SOUTH PACIFIC AREA

**FISHERIES, 1983-1986.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UN FAO AREA Description</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>1983</th>
<th>1984</th>
<th>1985</th>
<th>1986</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S-W Pacific.</td>
<td>90600*</td>
<td>63305</td>
<td>65576</td>
<td>152787</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.92*</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W+E Central Pacific.</td>
<td>10900</td>
<td>8523</td>
<td>11382</td>
<td>15072</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-E Pacific.</td>
<td>615040</td>
<td>605128</td>
<td>624473</td>
<td>710891</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Antarctic.</td>
<td>5919</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>1884</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>NIL</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian O. Antarctic.</td>
<td>73526</td>
<td>23664</td>
<td>28290</td>
<td>31916</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Atlantic O. Antarctic.</td>
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<td>172746</td>
<td>187955</td>
<td>397361</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>3.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL SOVIET CATCH.</td>
<td>9816651</td>
<td>10592923</td>
<td>10522831</td>
<td>11259955</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Key:*  
90600: Catch in tonnes  
0.92: Percentage of total Soviet catch.

FIGURE 2.1: DIVISIONS IN THE NEW ZEALAND EEZ FOR FOREIGN FISHING VESSELS.

K - Korean
R - Russian
J - Japanese
JV - Joint Venture
re - Reefer
tr - Trawler
ps - Purse Seiner
sq - Squid
tl - Tuna longliner

Foreign Fishing Activity Around NZ
Mid-February 1980

Source: Catch '80, March

(In thousands of tonnes).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Catch</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>10.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>56.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>74.3</td>
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<td>1974</td>
<td>90.6</td>
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<td>1975</td>
<td>49.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>86.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>123.0</td>
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TABLE 2.2(a) : SOVIET TRAWL FINFISH CATCH NEW ZEALAND EEZ
(In tonnes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>EEZ Area</th>
<th>Allocation Offered</th>
<th>Allocation Accepted</th>
<th>Catch</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31.3.79</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>1,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>8,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>27,464</td>
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<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOT.</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>40,318</td>
</tr>
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<td>31.3.80</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td></td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>01.4.83-30.9.83</td>
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<td>15,000</td>
<td>11,730</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<td>20,000</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Allocation Offered</th>
<th>Allocation Accepted</th>
<th>Catch</th>
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<td>nonE</td>
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<table>
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<th>1988</th>
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<td>Large Factory Trawler/Freezer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory Trawler/Freezer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
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</table>

**Source:** External Assessments Bureau (New Zealand), Port Calls By Soviet Vessels, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vessel Type</th>
<th>1986</th>
<th>1987</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries Research Ship.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passenger Liner.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Refriger Fish Transport</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sealer/ Trawler.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fisheries Training Ship</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish Factory Trawlers.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PORT</th>
<th>Soviet Fishing Vessels</th>
<th>Soviet Fishing Vessels NOT Under Charter or License</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>5(26)*</td>
<td>3(4)</td>
<td>8(30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tauranga</td>
<td>4(12)</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>4(12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napier</td>
<td>1(2)</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>1(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>45(142)</td>
<td>30(104)</td>
<td>75(246)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson</td>
<td>50(608)</td>
<td>6(73)</td>
<td>56(681)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lyttleton</td>
<td>154(1058)</td>
<td>27(137)</td>
<td>181(1195)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timaru</td>
<td>8(14)</td>
<td>1(7)</td>
<td>9(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunedin</td>
<td>91(265)</td>
<td>10(147)</td>
<td>101(412)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bluff</td>
<td>8(16)</td>
<td>2(3)</td>
<td>10(19)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Port visits expressed in number of calls and, in brackets, number of days spent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Licensed or Chartered</th>
<th>NOT Licensed or Chartered</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>337</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplies</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>338</td>
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<td>Maintenance/Repairs</td>
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<td>Discharge</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Licensing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catch Transshipment</td>
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<td>Clearance</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Crew Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical Evacuation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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