



# So Remorseless A Havoc: Whaling in the Southern Ocean

Phil Clapham<sup>1</sup> & Yulia Ivashchenko<sup>1,2</sup>



1 National Marine Mammal Lab  
Alaska Fisheries Science Center  
Seattle, WA 98115  
USA

2 Whale Research Centre  
Southern Cross University  
Lismore, NSW 2480  
Australia

*Soviet catcher, Antarctic*

**Populations recovering... or not**



*"I see them in hundreds and thousands"*  
The Beginning: South Georgia, 1904

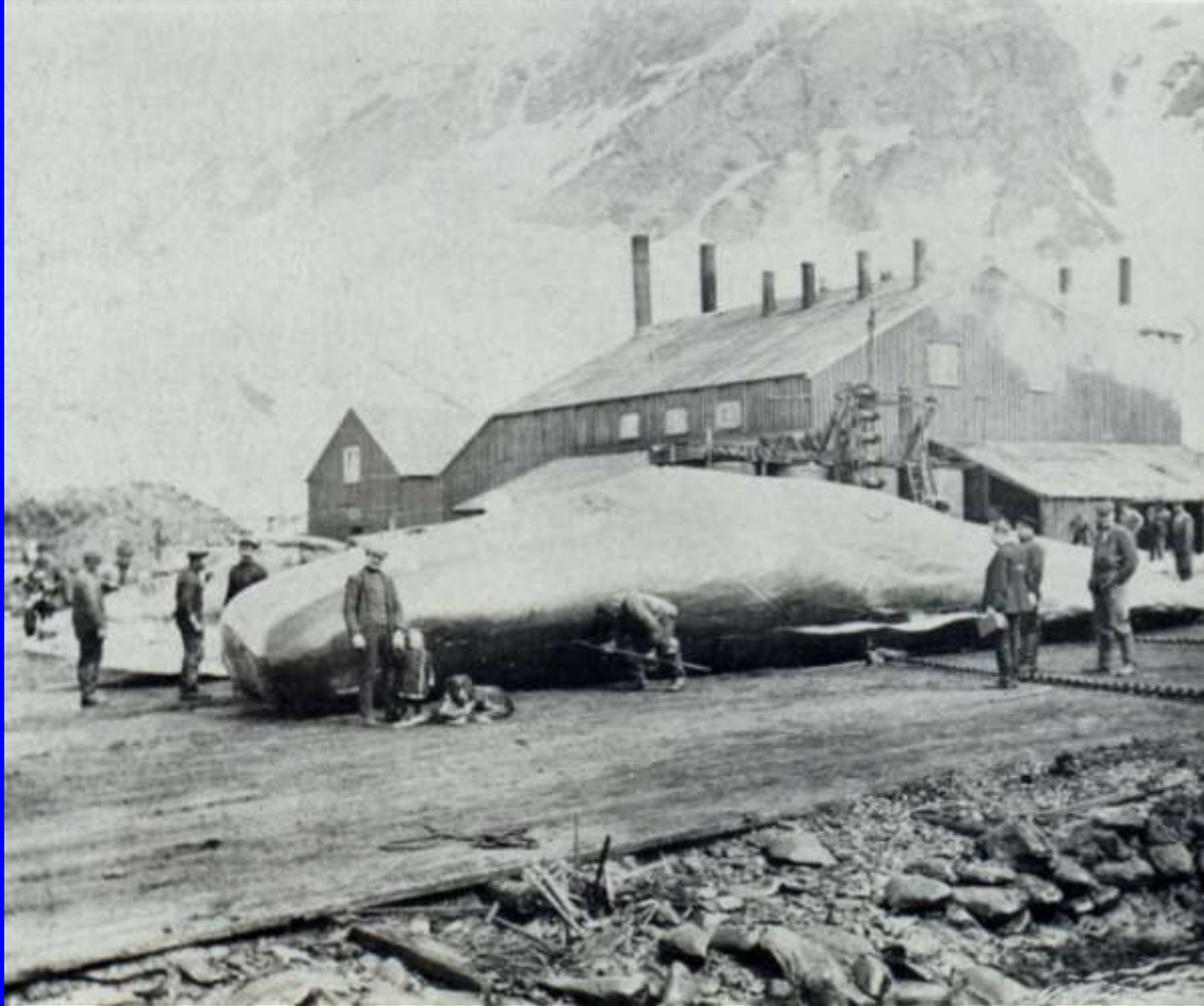


*Carl Anton Larsen*



*Grytviken, South Georgia, 1914*

# Larsen's South Georgia



*Grytviken, 1916*

First year  
184 whales

1904-1914  
1,738 blue whales  
4,776 fin whales  
21,894 humpbacks

# More numbers



*Abandoned catchers,  
South Georgia*

## S Georgia, 1931-1966

Blue: 36,771

Fin: 39,760

Humpback: 26,067

Sei: 1,791

Other: 1,028

Total: 105,417

## S Shetland, 1905-1931

Blue: 33,016

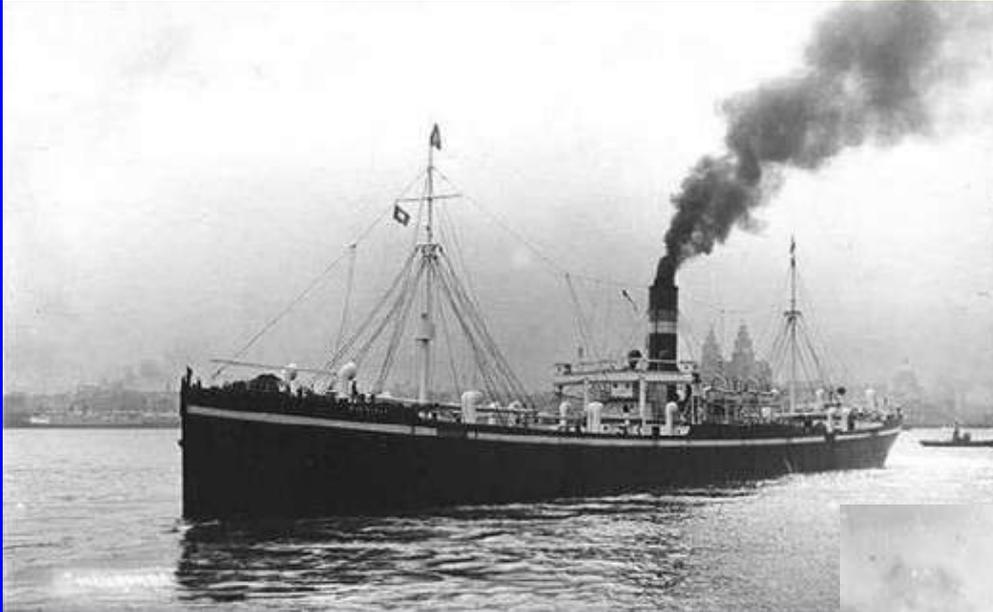
Fin: 38,617

Humpback: 11,412

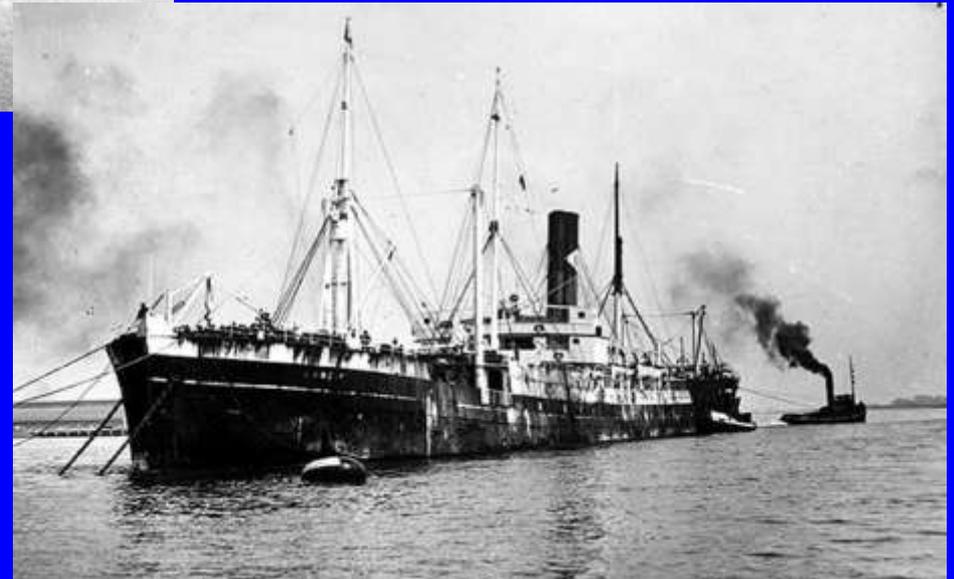
Other: 1,696

Total: 84,741

# Freed from ties to land



*FF Sir James Clark Ross (1923)*



*FF Lancing (1925)*

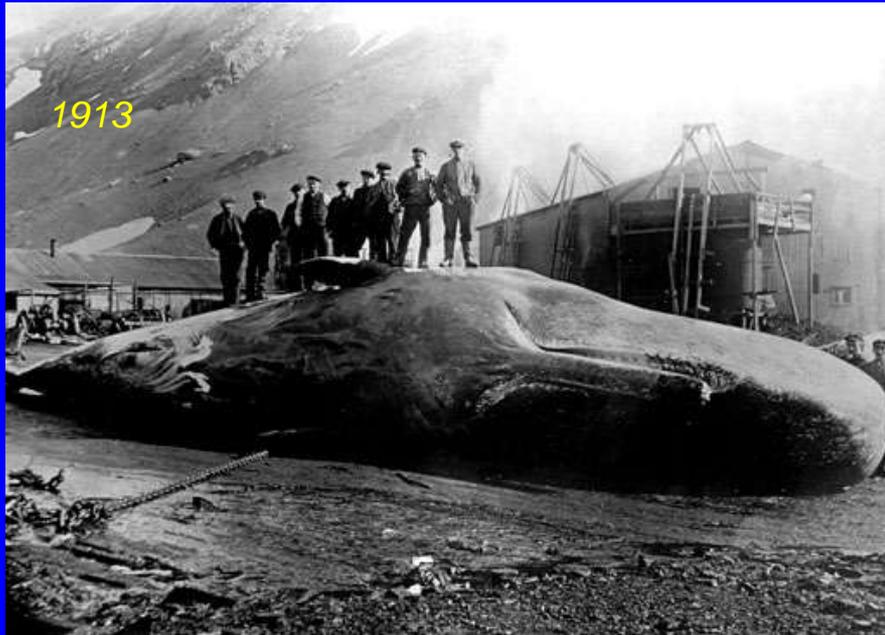
# Timeline

- 1904: Beginning of modern whaling in the Southern Ocean region
- 1923: First factory ship introduced
- 1925: First stern slip factory ship
- 1929: Total catch 40,201 whales
- 1930: Factory ships operating = 38 (with 184 catchers)
- 1931: Geneva Convention for the Regulation of Whaling signed... 29,410 blue whales killed
- 1934: First Japanese factory ship, *Tonan Maru*, works in the Antarctic
- 1937: International Agreement for the Regulation of Whaling signed... 46,039 whales killed



# Timeline (cont.)

- 1946: Intl Convention for the Regulation of Whaling signed
- 1947: *Slava* becomes the first Soviet factory ship to work in the Antarctic
- 1964: Total blue whale catch... 20 animals



*South Georgia*

# Timeline (cont.)

- 1972: IWC introduces International Observer Scheme
- 1982: IWC passes the Moratorium
- 1994: IWC adopts the Southern Ocean Sanctuary
- Today: Only “Special Permit” whaling by Japan (mostly minke whales)

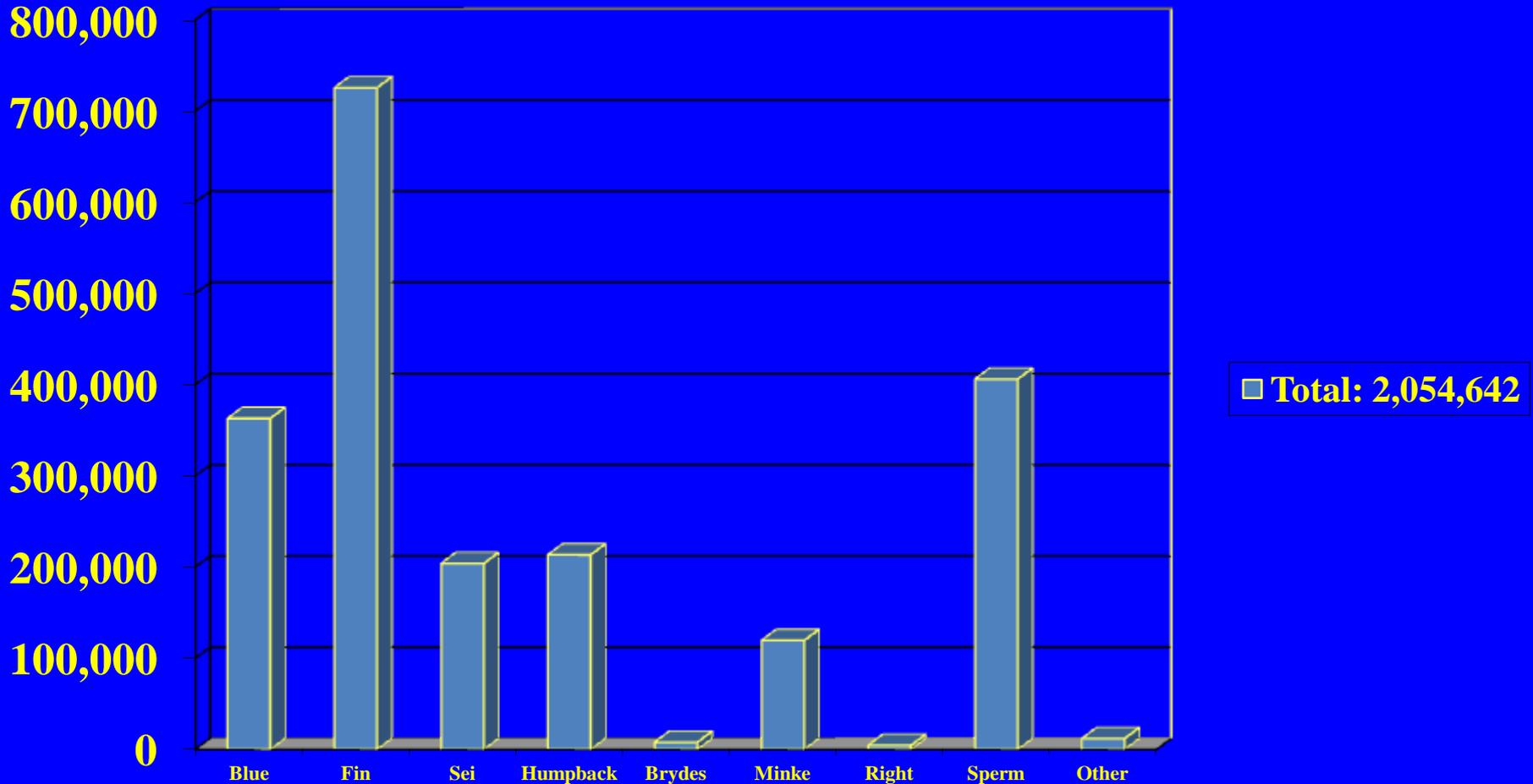
# So remorseless a havoc



*Catcher boat in ice, Antarctic*

- 1930's: >150,000 blue whales
- 1950's: >250,000 fin whales
- Total 20th century S. Hemisphere catch: 2 million whales

# Southern Hemisphere catch totals 1904-2000



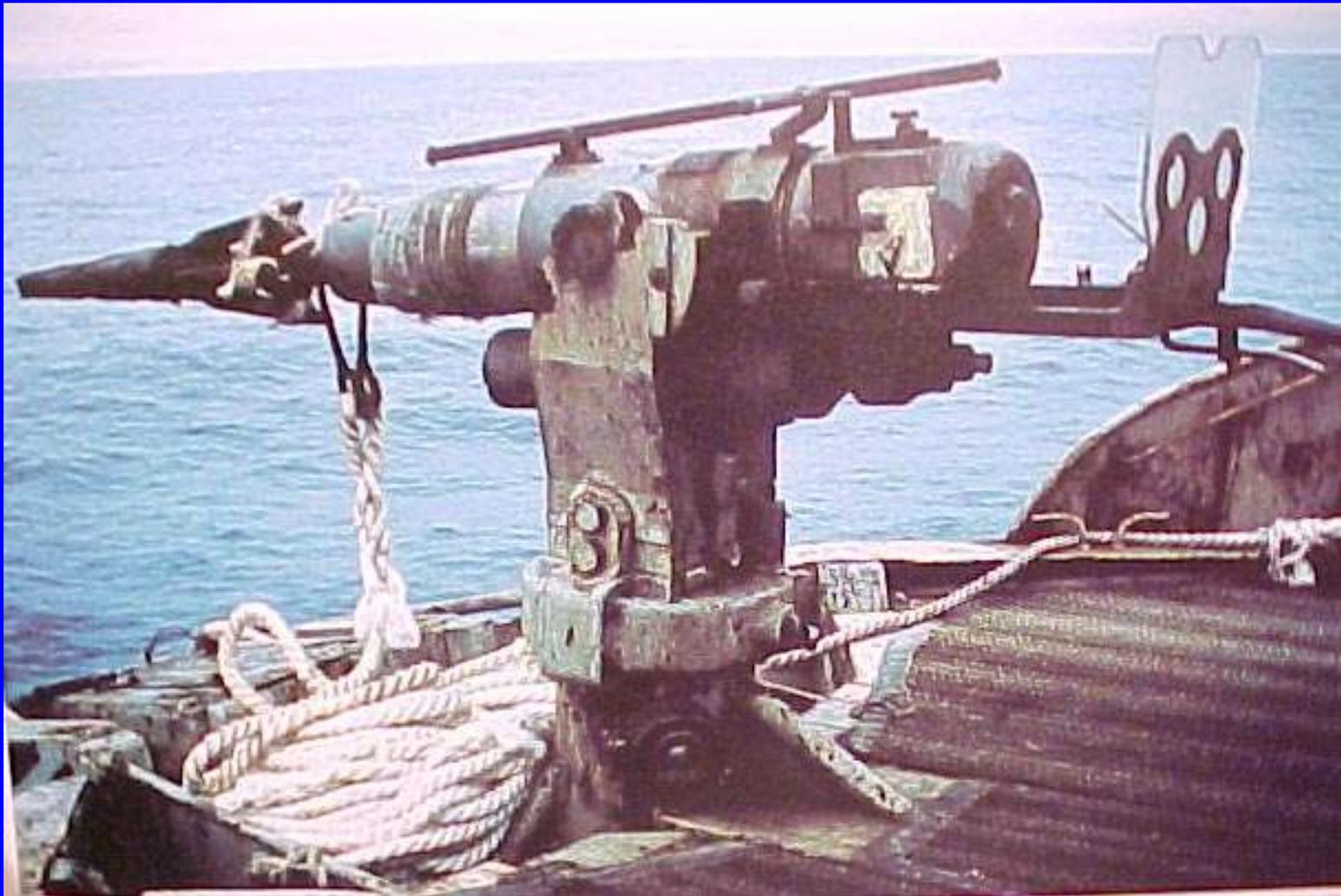


# The International Whaling Commission

- Convention signed 2nd December 1946
- Aim: *“to provide for the proper conservation of whale stocks and thus make possible the orderly development of the whaling industry”*
- Scientific Committee oversees research on whale populations, provides advice to the Commission on catches etc.
- Everyone signs (including the USSR)



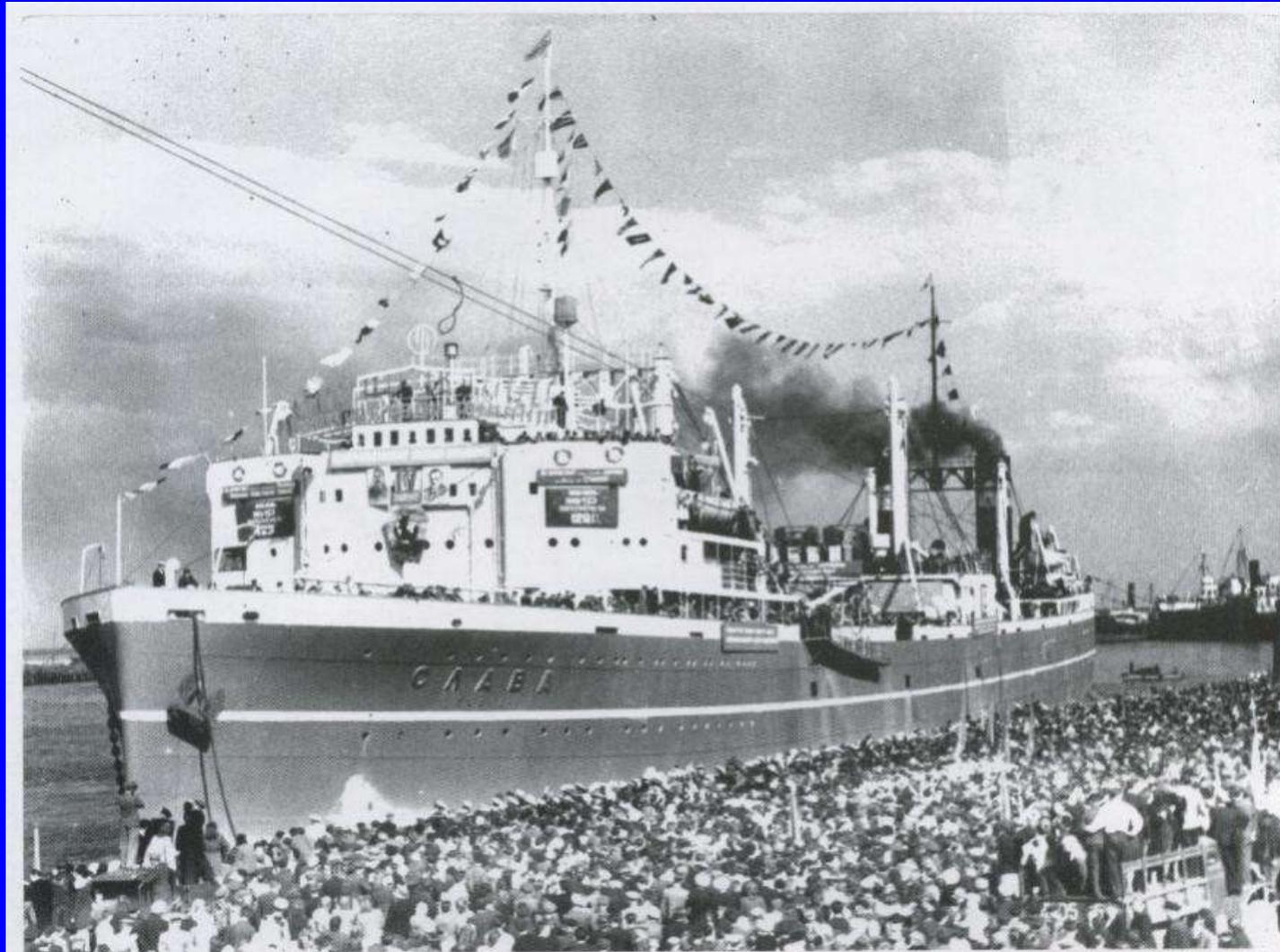
**The 1950's: Over-capitalization,  
Declining stocks.. and sustained high catches**



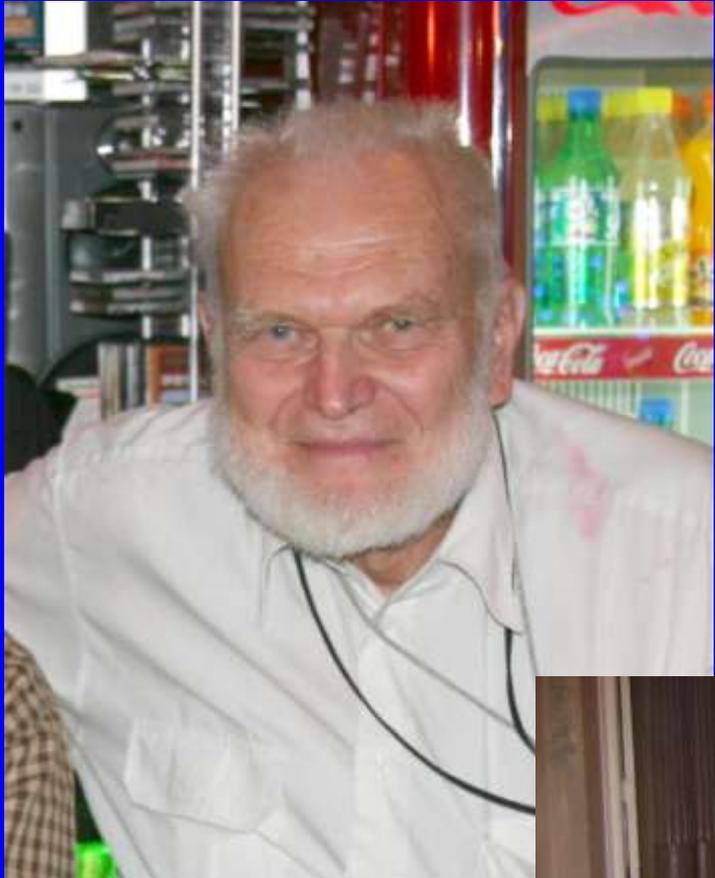
**1965: Something's wrong..  
Let's ignore it**



# Soviet illegal whaling, 1947-78



*Slava returns to Odessa*



*Alexey Yablokov*

# 1993: A Secret Revealed

*Dmitriy Tormosov, Yuriy Mikhalev,  
Nikolay Doroshenko*



*Bob Brownell*

# The Antarctic Fleets



*Slava*



*Sovetskaya Ukraina*



*Yuri Dolgorukiy*



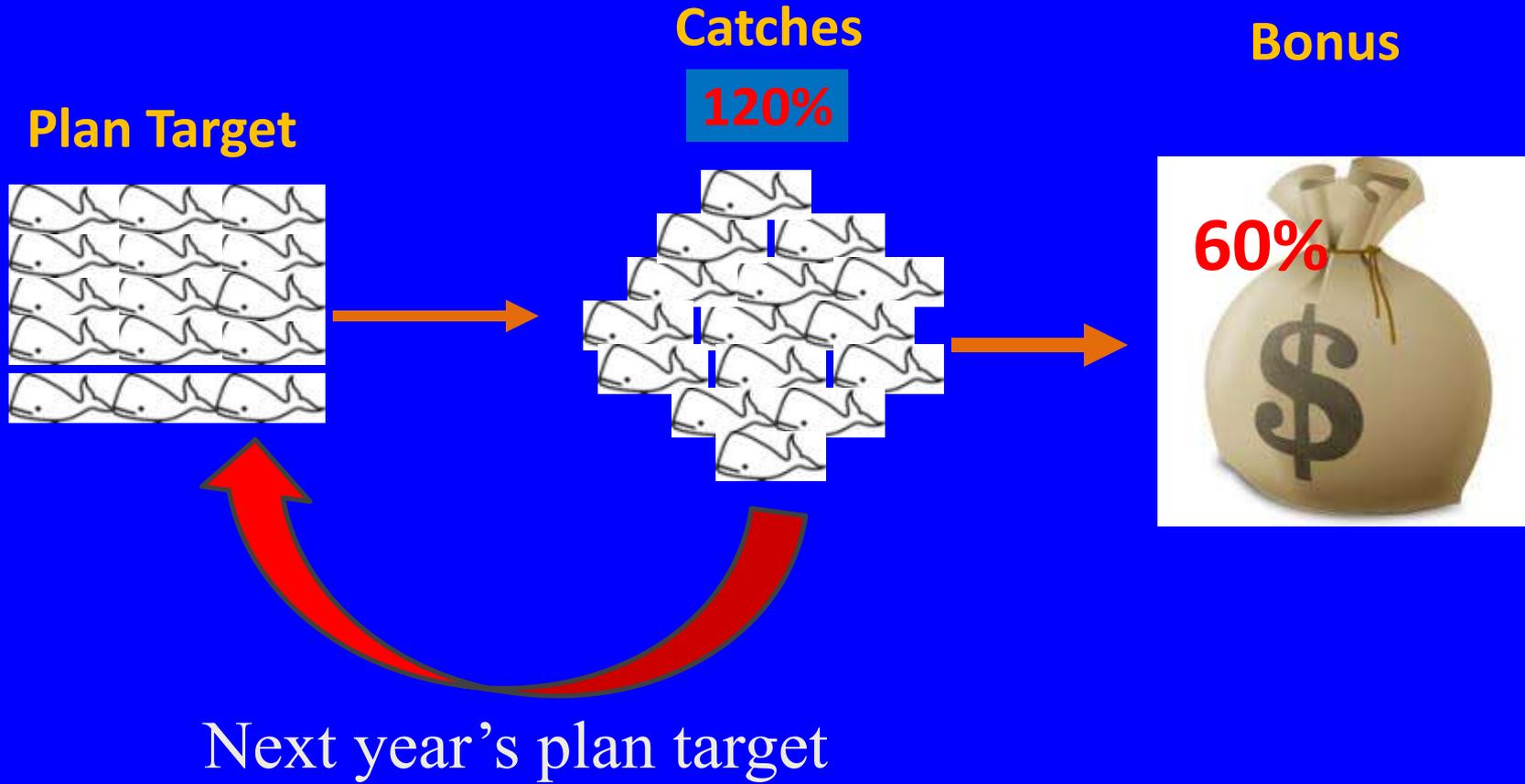
*Sovetskaya Rossiya*

# Industrial Planning Was Everything!

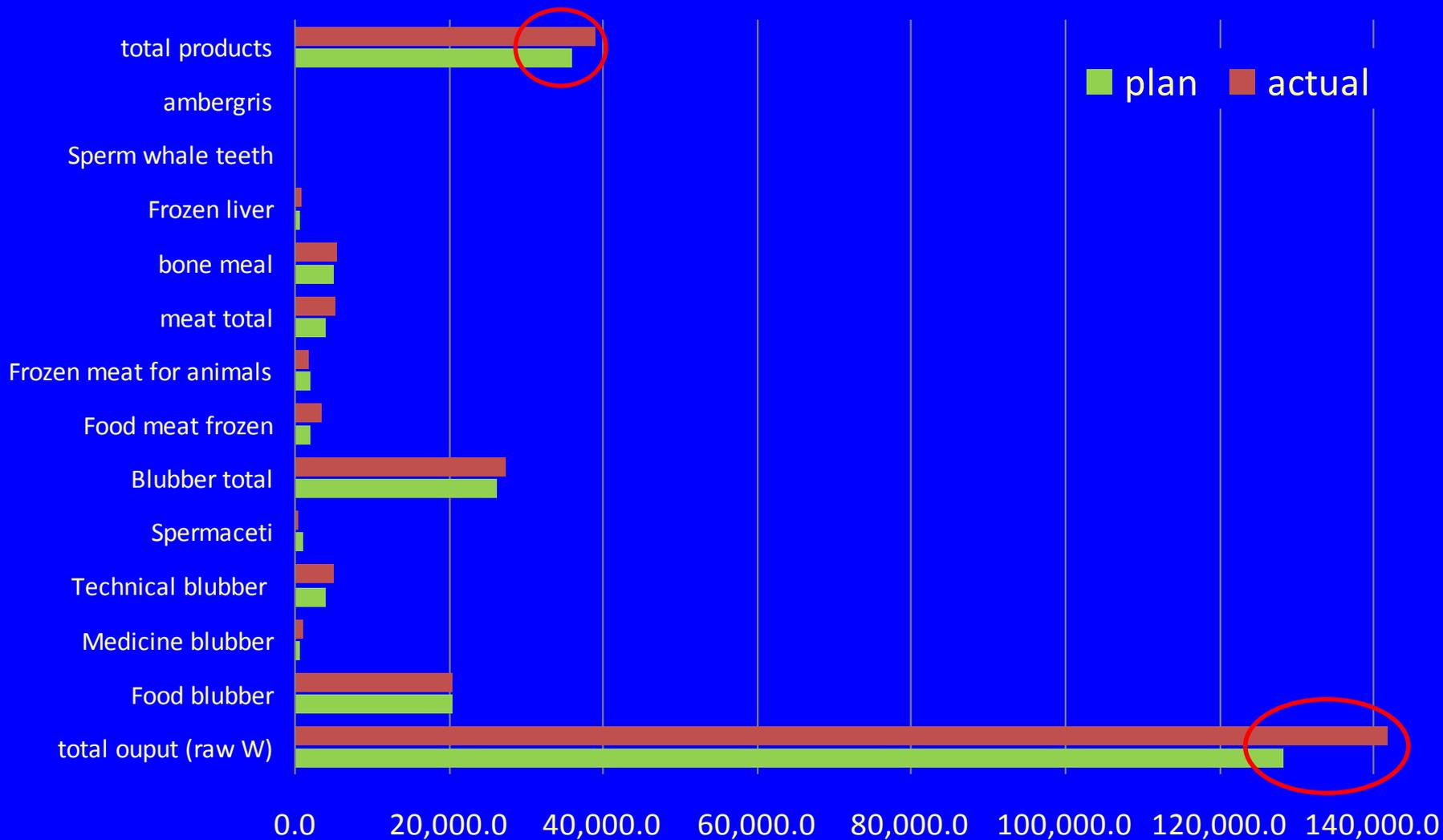


*We met our target, did you?*

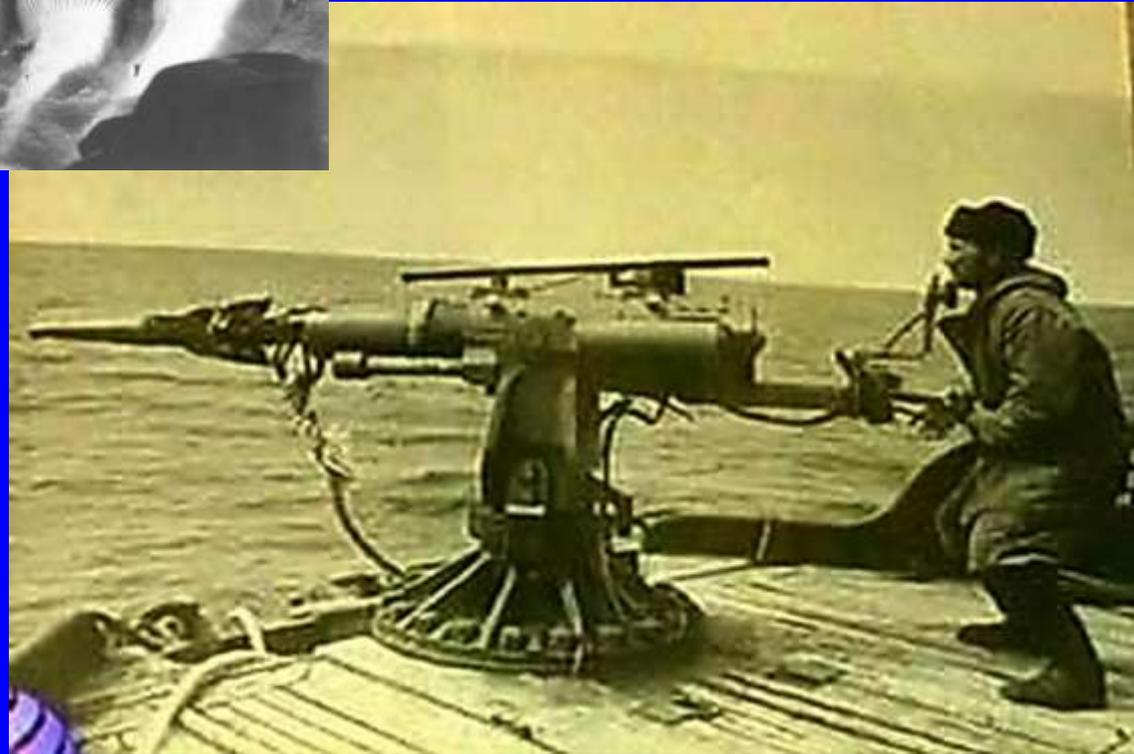
# *Soviet planning system*



# Table of targets and actual results for different products from the w/f Sovetskaya Rossia 1961-62 season



# Efficiency



# Inefficiency & Waste



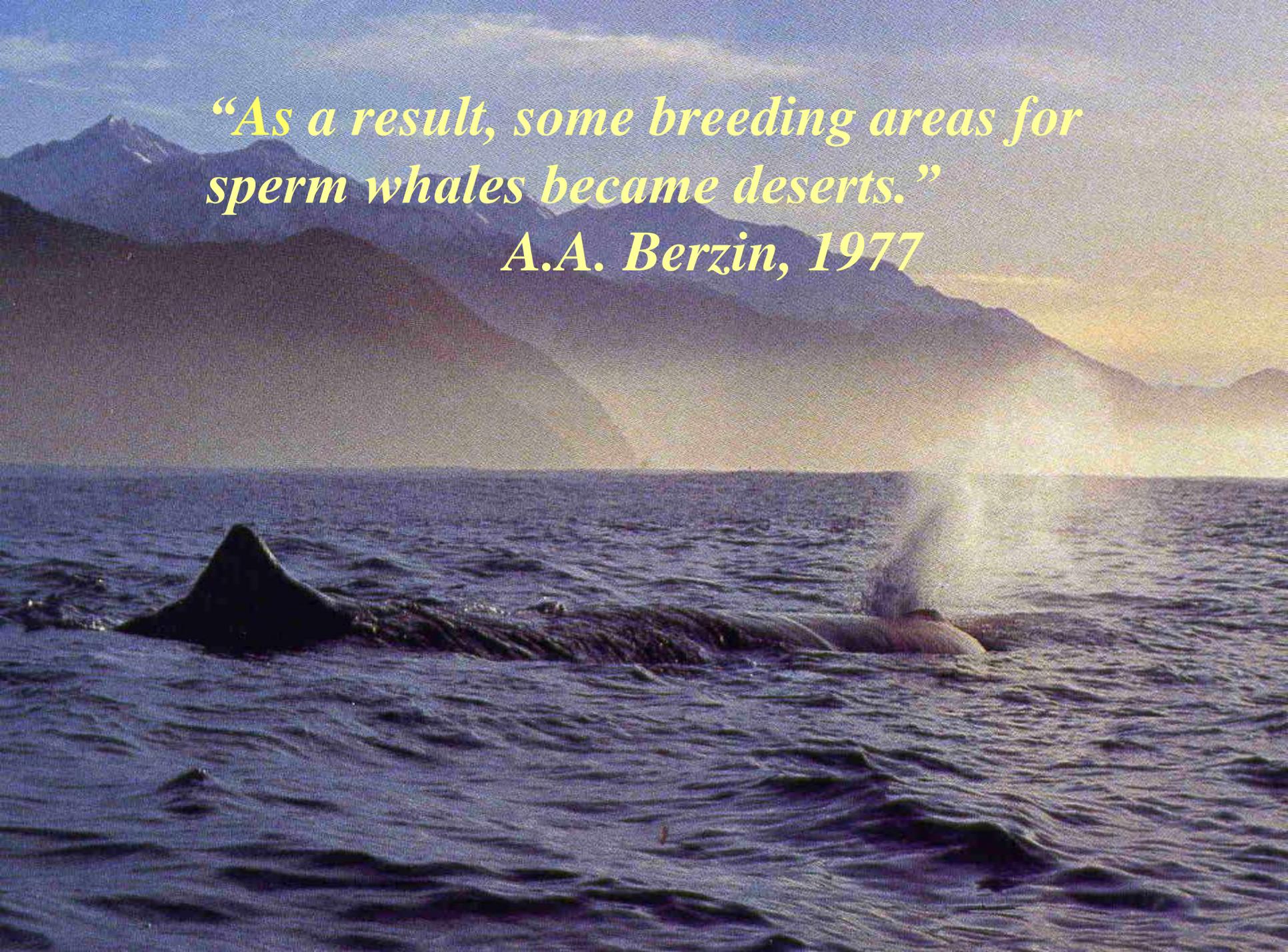


***“How long will we continue to discard in the sea such great wealth? Evidently we have too great an abundance of natural resources, that we can waste them and manage them so poorly.”***

***S.K. Klumov,  
1956***

*“As a result, some breeding areas for sperm whales became deserts.”*

*A.A. Berzin, 1977*



# Soviet catches of humpback whales in the Southern Hemisphere

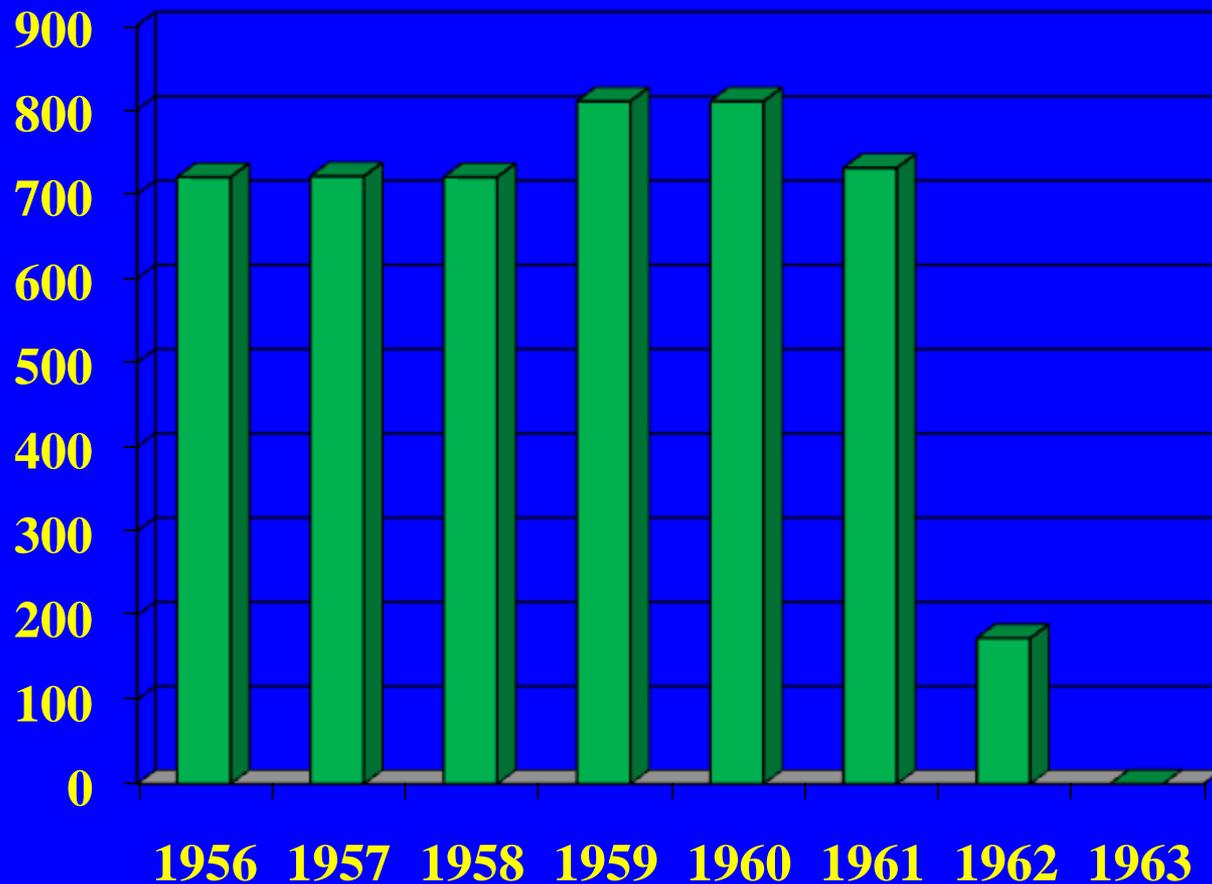
All years: 48,721

1959/60-1960/61: 25,890

Reported to IWC: 2,710



## Impact of Soviet catches: the Australian fishery



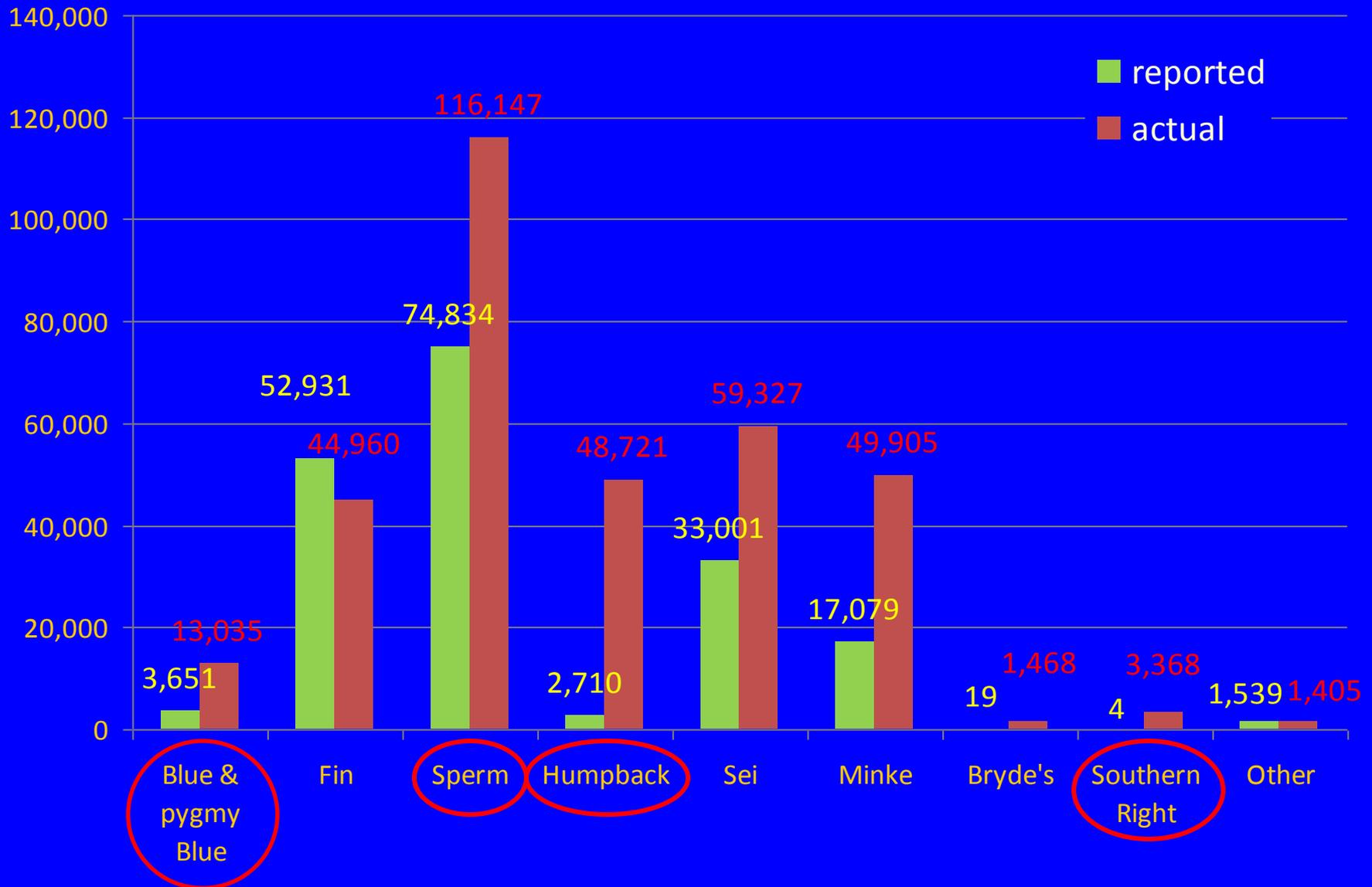
■ Catches, Byron & Tangalooma

**But everything stopped  
in 1972 - right?**



*Sovetskaya Ukraina, Turkey, 1995 (prior to breaking up)*

# Total Soviet catches in the Antarctic



# Soviet Catches: Southern Hemisphere

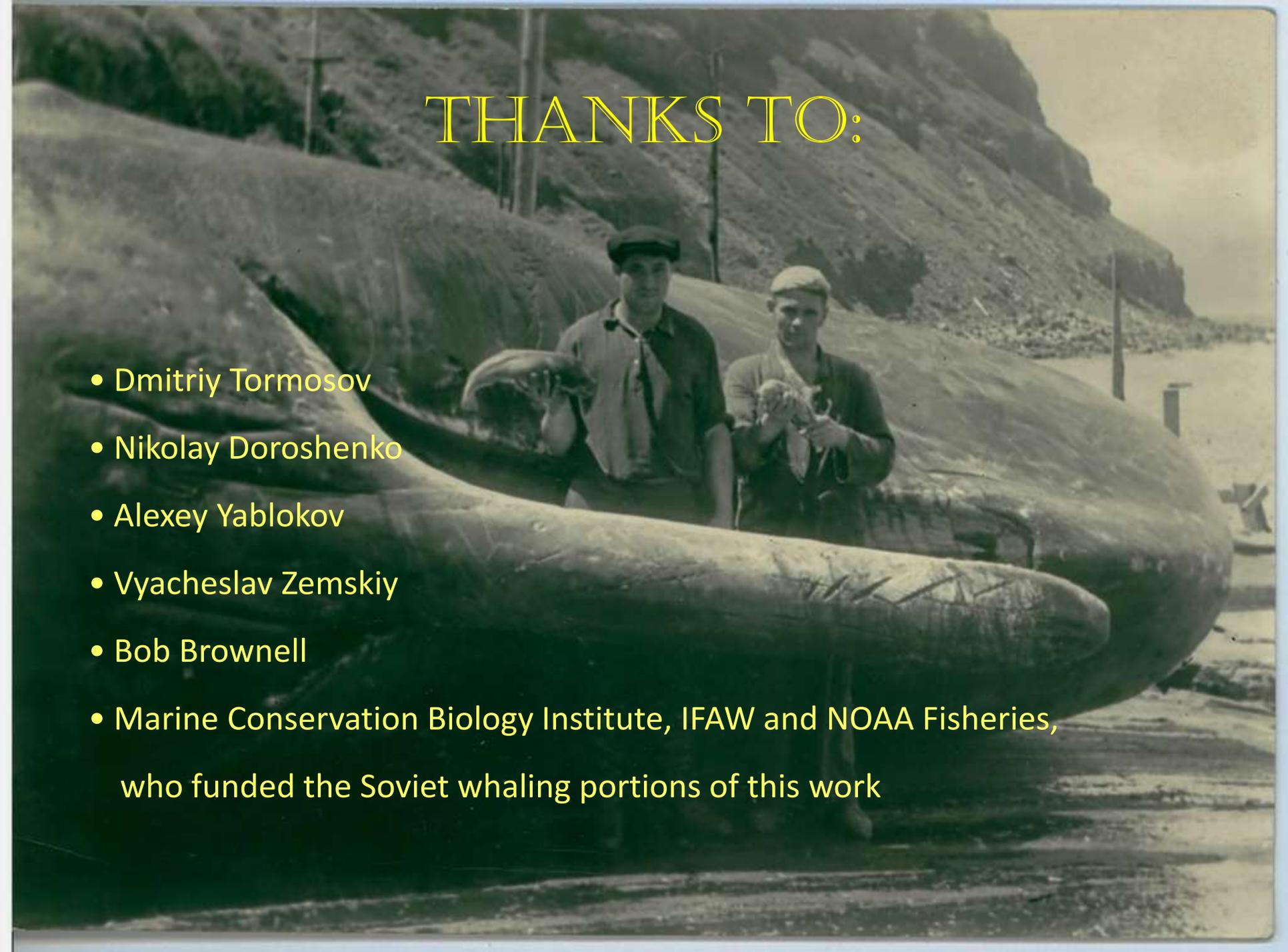
**Total reported: 185,778**

**Actually taken: 338,336**



# THANKS TO:

- Dmitriy Tormosov
- Nikolay Doroshenko
- Alexey Yablokov
- Vyacheslav Zemskiy
- Bob Brownell
- Marine Conservation Biology Institute, IFAW and NOAA Fisheries,  
who funded the Soviet whaling portions of this work



# Further (depressing) reading...



Soviet Whaling

Ivashchenko, Y.V., Clapham, P.J. & Brownell, R.L. Jr. (eds.) 2008. The Truth About Soviet Whaling: A Memoir, by A.A. Berzin [Translation: Y.V. Ivashchenko]. *Marine Fisheries Review* 70: 1-59.

## Soviet Illegal Whaling: The Devil and the Details

YULIA V. IVASHCHENKO, PHILIP J. CLAPHAM and ROBERT L. BROWNELL, Jr.

### Introduction

All the Truth About Whaling: A Memoir by A.A. Berzin, November 2008. Alaska Fisheries

Yulia Ivashchenko was organizing another visit to the National Marine Mammal Laboratory, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, 5055 Lagoon Blvd, Seattle, WA 98112 (see all publications and news coverage at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center website: <http://www.afsc.noaa.gov>). But 150 miles away from the National Marine Mammal Laboratory, Yulia Ivashchenko was in the National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA, 5055 Lagoon Blvd, Seattle, WA 98112 (see all publications and news coverage at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center website: <http://www.afsc.noaa.gov>).

ABSTRACT: In 1968 the USSR initiated a global campaign of illegal whaling that lasted for three decades and, together with the poorly managed "legal" whaling of other nations, severely depleted whale populations. Although the general story of this whaling has been told and the whaling industry covered in the literature, important gaps remain in the North Pacific. Furthermore, little attention has been paid to the details of this system in its earliest years.

Using interviews with former Soviet whalers and biologists on an island previously unexplored, we describe the early whaling industry and how it was established. We describe the early whaling industry and how it was established. We describe the early whaling industry and how it was established.

Soviet whaling began with the factory ship *Arctik* in 1911. Her 1920s whaling was a truly global reach, with crews from both home and foreign. Unlike most whaling, the ship pursued stocks that were not subject to harvest.

When Special Advisor for Ecology and Health to Russian President Boris Yeltsin commented that the Soviet Union had established a vast global campaign of illegal whaling that began in 1948 and lasted three decades (Yvashchenko 2008), Yvashchenko described how the U.S. Navy, while at first denied by the International Whaling Commission for the illegal whaling, then to which it was a regulator, had sought the sea in search of whales, ultimately sharing species, production, and other information established by the International Whaling Commission (IWC). In general, regulations track those from the whaling of protected species, including of reported biological data to estimate catches of under-reported stocks.

Whaling fleets, and their reporting of "legal" species to provide credible catch data. Although some researchers remain about the true number of the U.S. Navy's catches during this period, the difference between what was actually caught and what was reported to the IWC was large (Yvashchenko and Ivashchenko 2009). These catches, together with the poorly regulated whaling of other nations, ultimately reduced the population of several species, and in at least one case that of the entire population of the North Pacific right whale, *Eubalaena glacialis*.

Stock data used in this report is from the Bureau of Fisheries Whaling Division, which was the central repository for such data until the 1970s.

When these great numbers were reported, they were not considered and frequently obscured the following year's reports to match the previous year's production, resulting in a steady decline of the population. The catches were largely reported, presumably, that system had collapsed. Furthermore, productivity was measured in gross output (tonnage of whales) and not in terms of whether stocks were being replaced.

Whaling fleets comprised numerous people, including women who were also the captain of a smaller Soviet fleet of whaling vessels and the crew, and for whom, previous to the whaling industry, some were single mothers. Catching and processing of whales was highly seasonal and became increasingly efficient as the industry pursued more opportunities. As a result, the largest factories could process up to 100 small sperm whales, *Phocoena phocoena*, per day (Ivashchenko 2009).

Despite international, 100 whaling vessels, *Phocoena phocoena*, per day (Ivashchenko 2009). Despite international, 100 whaling vessels, *Phocoena phocoena*, per day (Ivashchenko 2009).

In late October of 1966, an imposing ship steamed quietly through the placid waters of the Suez Canal. Clad in drab industrial gray, and flying a Soviet hammer and sickle flag at her masthead, the vessel was accompanied by a large fleet of smaller craft. Any observer able to decipher Cyrillic script could have read, in rusted metallic letters on her bow, the name *Sovetskaya Ukraina*. The more experienced would perhaps have identified her as a whaling factory ship, traveling with her attendant fleet of catcher boats and scouting vessels on a transit that would take them south into the Red Sea and beyond.

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A few days later, however, as the fleet entered the Gulf of Aden, it abruptly broke its southbound track. Unmarked by anyone except some local fishermen, *Sovetskaya Ukraina* and her catchers turned to the northeast. As they cruised within sight of the desert coastline of Oman, the fleet fanned out. On November 4th, they began to kill whales.

When the Soviet fleet reached the Antarctic, the pattern was repeated. Already-depleted and supposedly protected stocks of whales were plundered for several months until the onset of the austral winter. Finally, as the weather turned increasingly foul, the factory ship and her catchers began the long journey home.

In keeping with its obligations as a signatory to international whaling agreements, the Soviet government dutifully reported that the *Sovetskaya Ukraina* fleet had taken a total of 2,727 whales during the 1966-67 season, all of them "legal" species such as sperm, *Physeter macrocephalus*, fin, *Balaenoptera physalus*, and sei, *Balaenoptera borealis*, whales. The actual catch was 5,127—a difference of 2,400 whales. Not was

## A Whale of a Deception

PHIL CLAPHAM and YULIA IVASHCHENKO

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*Sovetskaya Ukraina* operating alone. Elsewhere, two other Soviet factory fleets had taken a further 5,523 animals that went unreported. In a single season, 7,723 whales had literally disappeared without a trace.

This was neither the first nor the most productive year for illegal whaling. In just two Antarctic seasons (1959-60 and 1960-61), *Sovetskaya Ukraina* (Fig. 1) and another floating factory, *Slava* (Fig. 2), killed a staggering 25,000 humpback whales in the waters south of Australia and New Zealand.

This flagrant disregard for international agreement, and for the declining status of Antarctic whale stocks, was no renegade act of piracy by the commanders of the fleets concerned. The illegal catches of that whaling season were simply the latest in a carefully planned official strategy that had been implemented almost 20 years before. Few people suspected it, but the Soviet Union had been plundering the world's whale populations with abandon since 1947. By the time that the illegal catches finally ended in 1973, the Soviets had killed probably over 200,000 more whales than they had officially reported.

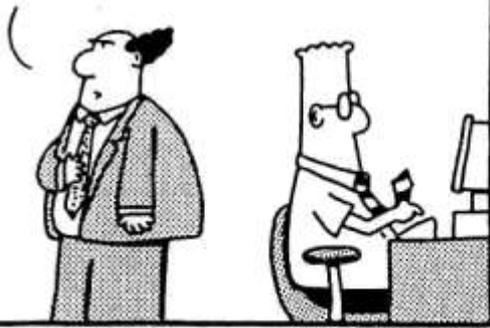
In the process, they had quite possibly succeeded in dooming at least one population of whales—that of the right whale in the eastern North Pacific—to extinction.

The story of whaling in the twentieth century is largely one of excess. It is also a story of technology literally catching up with greed.

Clapham, P. & Ivashchenko, Y. 2009. A whale of a deception. *Marine Fisheries Review* 71: 44-52.

# Thank you

SOMETIMES I WONDER,  
HOW WOULD MY LIFE  
BE DIFFERENT IF ALL  
WHALES WERE EXTINCT?



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IT'S NOT LIKE THEY DO ANY-  
THING FOR US. YOU NEVER  
HEAR OF SEEING-EYE  
WHALES. THEY CAN'T  
FETCH THE PAPER OR DRAG  
YOU OUT OF A BURNING  
BUILDING...



DON'T YOU THINK  
THE WORLD HAS  
TOO MANY FAT,  
WORTHLESS  
MAMMALS?



I WAS JUST  
THINKING  
THAT, SIR.



Internet: scottadams@aol.com

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