

## FOREWORD

The cover of the seventh volume of the *Polar Record* is taken from a photograph of the Norwegian sealing vessel *Vaaland* in Magdalenefjorden in north-west Spitsbergen. The photograph was originally published on p. 89 of Sepp Allgeier's *Die Jagd nach dem Bild* (Stuttgart, 1931), and was taken by him during a German film expedition in 1926. It is reproduced by kind permission of Engelhornverlag Adolf Spemann, Leinfelden bei Stuttgart.

In March 1953 the Royal Geographical Society announced the award of the Founder's Medal to P. D. Baird, Director of the Arctic Institute of North America, for his explorations in the Canadian Arctic. The Patron's Medal was awarded to Eigel Knuth, leader of the Danish Pearyland Expedition of 1947-50, for his contributions to Eskimo archaeology.

The subject of our frontispiece, Colonel Bernt Balchen, U.S.A.F., has acquired an outstanding reputation as a daring and skilful aviator with exceptionally wide experience of polar flying. Although he had already made himself a name by his trans-Atlantic flight with Commander R. E. Byrd, U.S.N., in 1927, he first achieved widespread public recognition as the pilot of the aircraft in which Byrd flew over the South Pole in 1929. Upon his return to North America, Balchen, at that time still a Norwegian subject, received the rare distinction of being made a United States citizen by special Act of Congress. When the Second World War broke out, Balchen joined the U.S. Air Force and was an obvious choice to command one of the important air bases which were set up in Greenland, where he spent several years at Bluie West Eight. His experience proved invaluable in the rescue of airmen who were forced down in this area, and his exploits earned him an almost legendary reputation. After the end of the war he was engaged for a time in the formation of the Scandinavian Airlines System, and then returned to North America to take charge of the 10th Air Search and Rescue Squadron in Alaska. His return coincided with the great expansion of United States activities in the Arctic, and in recent years Balchen has played an important part in such undertakings as the establishment of the joint Danish-United States air base at Thule in north-west Greenland.

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