

general plan. It opens with a concise description of the geographical and historical background, followed by a summary of resources and their development, including reference to towns and settlements. The chapter continues with a formal treatment of population and the labour force, including a useful discussion of the nationalities of the far north, particularly in relation to the incoming Russians. The section on government and administration points out the absence of any unifying administrative arrangements for the Soviet north. Transportation is particularly well described and also includes a detailed list of icebreakers used on the Northern Sea Route in 1976. A concluding section entitled 'National significance' places the Soviet north in perspective within the Soviet Union and concludes: '... it is clear that the North is very important to the USSR, economically and strategically, and ... the investment in it is such that its importance is unlikely to diminish'.

Northern Canada is treated in much the same way, but with a useful additional section summarizing the status of the region at the outbreak of World War II. This provides a baseline from which to assess the extensive changes which have taken place in the past 40 years. While the discussion of resources includes extended comment on petroleum, it might have been useful to emphasize that production of oil and gas in northern Canada has so far been negligible in comparison with Alaska and the Soviet north. There are interesting sections on native land claims and environmental issues, and on administrative and social conditions. However, no reference is made to the significant absence in northern Canada of the type of systematic planning followed in the northern USSR. The story of Alaska seems to be quite different. The 'evolution of northern polity' is demonstrated clearly with emphasis on economic forces, the interests of the well-organized white settlers and the influence of native groups. Interestingly, defence has been a major economic factor in Alaska's advancement—as it no doubt has been in the Soviet north—though the book makes little or no mention of this.

The chapter on Greenland was written while the country's political future was under discussion, so not unexpectedly 'home rule' occupies more space than it would have done a decade ago. The evolution of economic and political affairs is well described, though with little of the customary praise for Danish policies in comparison with those followed during the same period in northern Canada, northern Russia and in Alaska. It is, however, mentioned that during the 175 years of the Danish trading monopoly, the guiding principle was that the welfare of the Eskimos should receive the highest possible consideration, even over-riding where necessary the interests of trade. The north of the Old World, which includes Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland, with some reference to Svalbard, the Faeroe and Jan Mayen islands is adequately covered.

All in all the authors deserve our thanks and congratulations for providing in a little over 300 pages a detailed, contemporary, well-planned and highly readable study of the regions of the Arctic and sub-Arctic. The book will be of particular value to the increasing number of students taking courses in the study of northern lands.

THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE NORTHERN SEA ROUTE

[Review by William Barr* of William E. Butler's *Northeast Arctic passage*, Alphen aan den Rijn, Sijthoff and Noordhoff, 1978, xii, 199 p, illus.]

Professor Butler's book is the first of a series of volumes on the legal status of the international straits of the world edited by the Center of Marine Policy at the University of Delaware. The choice of Professor Butler as the author of this particular volume, which deals with the straits and seas of the Soviet Arctic, is a felicitous one; he is an internationally recognized expert on Soviet legal attitudes to various aspects of navigation and the law of the sea.

The timing of the work is also opportune. The attainment of the North Pole by the Soviet icebreaker *Arktika* in August 1977, the May-June 1978 voyage by the icebreaker *Sibir* and ice-strengthened freighter *Kapitan Myshevskiy* from Murmansk to Bering Strait by a route north of Novaya Zemlya, Severnaya Zemlya and Novosibirskiye Ostrova, and the maiden voyage of the Canadian icebreaking bulk carrier *Arctic* all indicate that a new era of more intense international

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utilization of northern waters is about to begin. It is pleasing, then, to see Professor Butler's lucid and careful assessment of the present legal status of the various aspects of the Northeast Passage, a name which he, perhaps rather pedantically, would prefer to the more commonly used Northern Sea Route. So far, this route has been almost exclusively a Soviet preserve, but the situation may well change.

The book opens with a list of the major straits in the Soviet Arctic, specifying such details as width, depth, current and ice conditions. The author then presents an account of the history of exploration and exploitation of the Northern Sea Route over the centuries. Here some disturbing omissions and expressions of reluctance to accept well-established aspects of the history of exploration of the Russian Arctic are to be found. In the first category, for example, the omission of Jonas Lied's name seems grossly unfair. His indomitable efforts to develop the Kara Sea Route between 1912 and 1917 are vaguely referred to in terms of an anonymous 'Siberian steamship company' (p 51). In the second category Professor Butler seems strangely reluctant to accept that the section of the Northern Sea Route between the Lena and the Kolyma rivers received heavy commercial use during the period 1633–80, despite this fact's meticulous documentation by the Soviet historian Belov in a source used by Butler elsewhere. The author categorizes these voyages as merely 'conceivable' (p 46) or 'probable' (p 49).

However, when in his own field of expertise in the latter part of the book, Professor Butler cannot be faulted. In clear, precise language he leads the reader through the complexities of Soviet interpretations of concepts such as 'internal seas', 'territorial waters' and 'historic waters'. His discussion of Soviet interpretation of 'rights of innocent passage' are crucial, given the USSR's 12-mile [22-km] territorial sea and the narrowness of most of the vital straits along the Northern Sea Route. Also of particular value is the author's careful assessment of the Informal Composite Negotiating Text which emerged from the 1977 session of the Law of the Sea Conference, and which applies to the special conditions governing Arctic straits. There can be no doubt that this assessment will represent a significant starting point for future interpretation or discussion.

A particular flaw of this work is Professor Butler's peculiar handling of Soviet place-names. By opting to use the Library of Congress system of transliteration he has automatically excluded any possibility of using the only acceptable versions of Soviet place-names, ie those officially recognized by the British Permanent Committee on Geographical Names and by the American Board of Geographic Names. Again, the book contains some strange paradoxes and inconsistencies in the use of place-names. It is disturbing, for example, to find on the first page of the main body of the text such a tautological monstrosity as Khrebet Ural Mountains (Range Ural Mountains). There are also strange compromises between translation and transliteration, such as Novosibirsk Islands for Novosibirskiye Ostrova. But it is among the islands of Zemlya Frantsa Iosifa that the author runs into the most pitfalls. In the case of Hooker Island (correctly Ostrov Gukera), the author opts for full restoration of the original English name but in another, Nortbruk Island (correctly Ostrov Nortbruka), he opts for a compromise of transliteration and translation. Of course, responsibility for the unacceptable forms used in this book may well rest with Butler's editor. In any case, these are details, and do not seriously detract from the high calibre of the content of the book.

IN BRIEF

SOVIET JOURNEY TO THE NORTH POLE ON SKIS, 1979

A party of seven men on skis left Ostrov Genrietta in the East Siberian Sea on 16 March 1979 to cross the 1 500 km of sea ice to the North Pole. The leader was D. Shp̄aro, a physicist from Moscow University and a veteran of many earlier polar journeys in the Soviet Arctic. This