

REVIEW

POLITICS IN HIGH LATITUDES

[Review by Terence Armstrong* of Willy Østreng's *Politics in high latitudes. The Svalbard archipelago*, translated by R. I. Christophersen. London, C. Hurst and Company, 1977, 134 p. £8.]

In international politics, as well as in physical geography, Svalbard is a most interesting place. Its political regime as a part of Norway stems from an international treaty (the Svalbard Treaty) signed at Versailles in 1920. But the sovereignty thereby conferred on Norway was qualified by obligations which detract from it: notably the obligation to accord all signatories of the treaty the same economic rights as Norwegians, to treat them all equally, and to prevent militarization of the area. The situation became potentially difficult when the Soviet Union proved to be the only foreign power claiming these rights and establishing a permanent presence on the islands. This book seeks to show how Norway has made out, and does it in a very honest, open, and objective way. The author is a research associate of the Fridtjof Nansen Foundation at Polhøgda, so he is not himself officially involved in Svalbard affairs.

After giving necessary and useful background information, he considers what has happened, in the 50 years since the treaty was signed, to the principle of equal treatment, the principle of demilitarization, and the other aspects of Norway's commitment. (He helpfully prints as appendices the treaty, the Norwegian Storting's Svalbard Act of 1925, and the Svalbard Mining Code of the same date.) In doing so, he touches on a number of interesting and topical points: the preferential treatment accorded to the Russians in some contexts, the mechanisms within the Norwegian government for dealing with Svalbard matters, the argument about rights over the Barents Sea continental shelf, the famous case of the Soviet double beds at Svalbard airport. He has a chapter on Norway's alternatives, as she faces the probable appearance on the Svalbard scene of major foreign and multi-national oil companies. He is moderately optimistic here that the Russians will come to accept the constraints of Norwegian law, since they would be unlikely to want newcomers to enjoy the same freedom from some controls as they themselves now enjoy.

The impression the book gives is of a small country standing up courageously to a very large neighbour, and being able to do so because she has nothing to hide.

EARLY COASTAL EXPLORATIONS IN NORTH-WEST ALASKA

[Review by Terence Armstrong of *A. F. Kashevarov's coastal explorations in northwest Alaska, 1838*, edited by J. W. VanStone and translated by D. H. Kraus. *Fieldiana Anthropology*, Vol 69, Chicago, Field Museum of Natural History, 1977, 104 p, illus.]

When the Russians were the owners of Alaska, their interest was largely in collecting the pelts of sea otters, and this kept them to coastal regions of the Pacific littoral. There was little exploration to the north of Bering Strait or inland. One quite significant contribution, a coastal voyage in Eskimo skin boats from Cape Lisburne to just beyond Point Barrow in 1838, has remained little known because the account of it has been unavailable in English (and in Russia, published only posthumously, in 1879). This book remedies that omission. A. F. Kashevarov's journal of his voyage is translated and annotated. The chief interest is in his comments on the natives he met, and the volume includes a translation of his 'Notes on the Eskimos in Russian America' (1846). He was born in Alaska of a Russian fur-trading father and either an Eskimo or an Aleut mother, so his account is not just that of an explorer making a once-only visit.

The translation reads well and the commentary is full and informative. Many place-names would be difficult indeed to identify without the editor's help. There are some small inaccuracies: Cook

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