

in horrifying detail, direct and immediate information on the atrocities committed and of the awful fate that befell most of the inhabitants of Nikolaevsk at the hands of the Bolsheviks.

Yet it must be borne in mind that the author was certainly not an objective observer of events, if, indeed, such could be found in the Russian far east in the early 1920s. He was a passionate anti-Communist and regarded all the partisans simply as cut-throats. Soviet writers admitted that Triapitsyn and his senior colleagues committed excesses but, of course, took a precisely opposite view with regard to the bulk of the partisans. The author nowhere mentions that equally appalling treatment was meted out to the innocent in the region by such White leaders as Grigory Semyenov, Ivan Kalmykov, and Roman Ungern-Sternberg. In this context, it is worth noting that the author points out that several Jews were among those executed and comments that this counters the claim frequently made that the Bolsheviks acted towards the Jews with greater humanity than did the Whites. He makes no mention, however, of such incidents as the massacre, by the Whites, of some 2000 Jews in Yekaterinburg in July 1919.

Despite the author's bias, which is interesting in its own right, the book is to be appreciated as a near-contemporary account of an important incident that took place towards the end of the allied intervention in Russia and one that is either ignored or, at most, barely mentioned in general histories of the period. As well as providing full details of events, the author attempted to place the incident in its overall political context and seems, for example, to have been under no illusion that if it had not occurred, the Japanese would have concocted some other reason to justify their occupation of the region and of northern Sakhalin.

The edition is attractively presented and substantially bound. There is an introduction by the translator, whose family came from Nikolaevsk, and detailed and helpful maps. These include a street plan on which events can be conveniently followed. There are 27 photographs that convey an impression of the town before its destruction; portraits of Triapitsyn, Lebedeva, and their associates; and pictures of the victims, including one of dead bodies washed up on the shore of the river. Inside the cover is a large panoramic photograph of the town after the fire. There are comprehensive notes and a bibliography of Russian and western sources. There is no index. For a work of such limited potential readership and yet so well printed and bound, the price is very modest.

This book will be required reading for those interested in the social structure of Russian towns in the early twentieth century, the history of Siberia in the 1920s, the allied intervention, and the relations between Russia and Japan in the period between the Treaty of Portsmouth (1905) and the Second World War. Its publication will greatly assist the process of reappraisal of views on these matters following the opening of the Russian archives.

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**WORKING THE NORTH: LABOR AND THE NORTHWEST DEFENSE PROJECTS, 1942–1946.** William R. Morrison and Kenneth A. Coates. 1994. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press. xiv + 270 p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 0-912006-72-2. US\$30.00.

This latest product of a prolific Canadian collaborative partnership examines the experiences of those who worked on the engineering projects designed to defend the exposed North American northwest in the wake of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. The northwest encompasses Alaska, Yukon Territory, and the Northwest Territories, as well as northern British Columbia and Alberta. The 60,000 workers in question — who far outnumbered locals and whose 'invasion' marked the region's biggest upheaval since the gold-rush era — were a diverse crew: Canadian and American; military and civilian; black, white, and native; government and private; and male and female. The major enterprises involved were the construction of the Alaska (Alcan Military) Highway and the Canol Pipeline, with its associated road, and the expansion and upgrading of the Northwest Staging Route (a string of airfields). But also included are lesser schemes such as a telegraph/telephone system and the connecting road between the Alcan and the Alaskan port of Haines.

Coates' earlier popular history of the Alaska Highway (*North to Alaska!*) contained material on the road builders' lives, and this book might be considered an extension of that particular angle. Following a useful scene-setting chapter, which outlines the state of northwestern frontier society on the eve of the southern influx, the reader is provided with a comprehensive portrait of everyday life, both on and off duty. Recruitment, logistics, inducements, wages, expectations and impressions of the north, living conditions, white attitudes to minorities, relations with management, and after-hours activities all receive attention. Big-game hunting, for instance, furnished a welcome diversion and respite from dreary army rations. The pursuit of moose and sheep, however, also brought conflict with game authorities and subsistence users. *Working the north* focuses on reciprocal impacts: that of workers on the north and that of the north on the workers — the latter entailing more than just the obvious '3 Ms' (mud, muskeg, and mosquitoes). Adaptation to the north stands out as a unifying thread, not least the problems of labour management in a vast hinterland.

A chapter is devoted specifically to the admittedly small numbers of women and natives involved. Discussion of female workers illustrates how the book provides a wider context — in this case female employment on northern frontiers — yet without undue digression. The authors proceed judiciously and are not in the business of claiming startling changes. They stress that the restricted areas in which native skills and 'local knowledge' were recognized and utilized, such as guiding and packing,

sprang from and reinforced traditional notions of what the indigenes were supposed to be good at. The same applied to women, who were generally confined to standard clerical and domestic roles. United States–Canadian tensions feature as and when they arose, although they are treated without a trace of Yankee-bashing.

All history may well be local history, but good local history is that which connects with other places. This study's northern context is located within the broader and highly topical contexts provided by government, capital, and labour in the early twentieth century; Afro-Americans in the US military; women; war and work; and native peoples and the modern wage economy. As historians of conventionally defined peripheral regions, the authors are entitled to indulge in a little missionary work. Their critique is double-edged: of northern history for being slow to take on board the concerns of the 'new' social history, and of mainstream labour and social historians for being 'south-centered' and preoccupied with the milieu of cities and factories. They aim 'to bring the role of *northern* workers to the attention of labor historians, and to bring the role of northern *workers* to the attention of northern historians' (page 8). An endnote to chapter two (page 65) that explains what muskeg is provides clinching evidence that this book is intended to be read beyond the northwest! *Working the north* is a laudable attempt to de-localize northern history without diluting local colour.

The bibliography is extensive, stretching to the treatment of black American soldiers in Britain and Australia. Archival materials were consulted from Ottawa to Washington, DC. But the sources that stand out — aside from wartime newspapers — are the interviews with and questionnaires completed by those participants (many far into their eighties) who were tracked down — not least through the mailing lists of organizations that hold veterans' reunions. These survivors, for whom their northern wartime exploits were patently 'more than just another job' (page 28), generated a welcome additional flow of photographs, letters, and tape recordings. The authors are alert to the strengths and weaknesses of oral history, recognizing that their respondents are a self-selected group, and alerting the reader to discrepancies between oral and documentary sources.

Many of the most dramatic and profound changes to affect the northwest were triggered by World War II. Among these changes, one that caught this reviewer's eye is the role of the northwest defence projects in the transformation of the typical frontier construction worker from abject and exploited canal digger and railroad builder to the unionized 'fat cat' of labour. This book leaves the reader with a sense of the potential of the recent history of northwestern North America. Yet opportunities to conduct comprehensive research are dwindling in one vital respect: the protagonists are dying off. From the standpoint of oral testimony, the 1940s are arguably the least recent decade for which it is still possible for significant numbers of adult participants to speak for themselves.

Morrison and Coates have captured their quarry just in time. (Peter Coates, Department of Historical Studies, University of Bristol, Bristol BS8 1TB.)

#### Reference

Coates, K.A. 1992. *North to Alaska! Fifty years on the world's most remarkable highway*. Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press.

**ASIA IN ANTARCTICA.** R.A. Herr and B.W. Davis (Editors). 1994. Canberra: Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, Australian National University. xvii + 232 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0-86740-426-4.

There will be many views of a place depending on from where it is viewed. Apparently, every place is at once many places: there is no one objective description, just alternative geographies. The major contribution of *Asia in Antarctica* lies precisely in making this point clearly and forcefully in regard to Antarctica, and thereby bringing to the forefront the diverse perspectives of Asian states on matters Antarctic. Now that the Antarctic Treaty System is no longer as exclusive a 'club' as it was a couple of decades ago, given its diverse membership and enhanced global eco-political profile, it is both timely and illuminating to approach Antarctica from viewpoints other than the erstwhile predominantly Anglo-American one. This may also allow the observer and the analyst to discern and dissect the regional characteristics, if there are any, of the ways in which the Asian states — both within and outside the Antarctic Treaty System — perceive the scientific, economic, ecological, and geopolitical significance of Antarctica.

Based on the proceedings of a conference held on the subject towards the end of 1991 in Hobart, *Asia in Antarctica* is divided into four major sections: (i) Asia in Antarctica — the background; (ii) national perspectives on Antarctica; (iii) science, environment, and development; and (iv) towards a common approach and future. Introducing the volume and providing an overview of its contents is a brief but perceptive contribution by R.A. Herr, one of the book's editors. He begins by posing the key, overarching questions addressed in the volume from different standpoints. Is there anything distinctively Asian about the involvement of individual Asian states in Antarctica? While Europe and South America do seem to have had some common regional characteristics in their approaches to Antarctica, could a similar regional influence be discerned, even if in embryonic form, with regard to the more recent Asian involvement in Antarctica? Are there common, or at least shared, threads of interest that motivated so many Asian states to articulate a position on Antarctica during the 1980s? Herr notes the decisive influence of the changes in the Law of the Sea during the 1970s, the environmental movement, and the ending of the cold war on South Polar developments; underlines resource motivations behind the entry of many Asian states into Antarctic politics; and points out the split in the Third World on the question of Antarctica, with India and China