

LIGHT ON THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

THE NORTHERN LIGHT: FROM MYTHOLOGY TO SPACE RESEARCH. Brekke, Asgeir and Egeland, Alv. 1983. Berlin, Springer-Verlag. 170p, illustrated, hard cover. ISBN 3.540.12429.2. US\$42.00

This beautifully prepared book is a historical study of beliefs and research on the *aurora borealis*. Starting with references to the phenomenon in the work of the Greek philosophers, we are provided with an excellent discussion of the different explanations given in the mythology, literature and early science of Scandinavia. Native people of the sub-Arctic and Arctic often saw the Northern Lights as a manifestation of a vengeful supernatural power, whilst others believed it to be a reflection of flames from the Realm of the Dead. For others again, perhaps in more southerly latitudes where it was rarely encountered, the aurora was an omen of misfortune.

Yet from an early time there were also attempts to explain the phenomenon within some scientific frame of reference, as did the anonymous author of the thirteenth century *Konungs skuggsjá* [King's mirror]. That important text implies it was only observed at that time in more northern areas, which leads the authors of this book to suggest there have been substantial variations in its appearance over the centuries.

We are provided with a fine discussion of the treatment of the *aurora borealis* in poetry and imaginative writing, as well as a visual review of its treatment in art. The fine contemporary photographs, especially the coloured ones, document the great variation in form and colouring that the Northern Lights manifest. The discussion of the varying approaches to its study by scientists is very well done, at least for laymen with scant scientific understanding. My only complaint about the book is the quality of the translation. In such a finely produced book it is regrettable that one encounters, all too often, such fractured English as: 'Alfvén's theory is today the fundamental on which our understanding of the northern light is based' (p 136).

Ian Whitaker
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada V5A 1S6

SEA LAW AND THE POLAR REGIONS

EVOLUTION OF THE LAW OF THE SEA. Theutenberg, Bo Johnson. 1984. Dublin, Tycooly International Publishing. 261 p, maps, soft cover. ISBN 0.86346.042.9. £8.50, US\$12.50 (hard cover £16.50, US\$25.00).

This is a study of recent developments in the law of the sea with particular reference to their impact on polar areas. It proceeds not merely from a legal standpoint but also draws heavily on the relevant scientific, environmental and military background. Subtitled 'a study of resources and strategy with special regard to the polar areas', the work lays its principal emphasis on questions of natural resources and military strategy in the polar regions. The author states in his Introduction that he has deliberately abstained from elaborating complicated legal questions; nevertheless, his multi-disciplinary approach results in an illuminating exposition of the relevance of the new law of the sea to the Arctic and Antarctic.

The work is inevitably dominated by the United Nations Convention on the Law of

the Sea adopted by the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea on 30 April 1982. Whatever may be the future of state participation on the convention, its comprehensive text, developed by a process of consensus, must be the point of departure for any modern treatment of the subject. After a brief introductory chapter dealing with certain earlier developments in the law of the sea, Mr Theutenberg summarises the principal provisions of the convention and examines its present status. In Chapter III, certain important provisions (those relating to innocent passage, transit passage, the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf) are considered in greater detail.

The kernel of the work is to be found in two chapters, dealing respectively with Arctic and Antarctic, in which the multi-disciplinary approach is applied. In the first the effects of new law of the sea regime and its implementation by interested states are considered in relation to the Arctic Ocean, in the context of historical claims relating to the Arctic and its strategic importance. The regime's likely impact on scientific research, cooperation and resource exploitation are also considered. The second examines claims to sovereignty in Antarctica and the Southern Oceans, including the question of the Falkland Islands, and considers the effect of the Antarctic Treaty. The likely future of Antarctica is dealt with in a section which also usefully summarises the most recent political developments. In a further chapter the author considers natural resources in the perspective of conflicts with particular reference to the international sea-bed area.

Mr Theutenberg has undoubtedly achieved his stated objective of giving a broad picture of developments in these areas. One particular virtue is that the work contains a great deal of very up-to-date factual information; the work also includes a bibliography, and a number of particularly useful appendices including the text of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

David Lloyd Jones
Downing College, Cambridge

RECENTLY RECEIVED BOOKS AND REPORTS

THIN ICE. Dudley, N. and Gordon Clark, J. 1983. Cambridge, Marine Action Centre. 73 p, illustrated, soft cover. Price not shown.

Can the Alaskan Bowhead Whale hunt be organized to conserve both whale stocks and Inuit culture? This book reviews the problem and possible solutions.

RUSSKOYE DEREVYANNOYE ZODCHESTVO. GRAZHDANSKOYE ZODCHESTVO. Russian wooden architecture. Civil Architecture. Opolovnikov, A. V. 1983. Moscow, 'Iskusstvo'. 287 p, illustrated, hard cover.

Wooden architecture, mainly from Europe north of USSR; methods of construction and use. Descriptions of individual buildings and villages, with many photographs and plans.

GUIDE FOR EXPEDITIONS TO THE CANADIAN ARCTIC ISLANDS. Minister of Supply and Services Canada. 1983. Ottawa, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. 36 p, illustrated, soft cover. ISBN 0.662.52899.9. Free.

Second revised edition of a booklet designed to help intending travellers in the Canadian Arctic. Available on request from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H4, Canada, in French or English, it 'identifies sources of information regarding laws, regulations and procedures for travel in the North, and offers suggestions designed to make any visit to Canada's unique northern frontier as safe and trouble-free as possible'.