

series, however, the system of designating the footnotes by page and line instead of by number was found most irritating, especially when it breaks down, as it does on p. xxxvi.

The problem of ensuring that this expensive volume (\$18.95) enjoys the wide circulation it deserves is partially resolved by the publication of a paperback edition (\$7.95) which abridges the annotations but retains the full text of the memoirs.

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*Imperial Russia in Frontier America; the Changing Geography of Supply of Russian America, 1784-1867*, by James R. Gibson. New York, Oxford University Press, 1976. Pp. x, 257; *illus.*; \$6.00 (Pap. text ed.), \$10.00 (Cloth text ed.).

Russian America, which played an important part in the formation of British Columbia's boundary with Alaska, has been a subject of renewed interest in recent years on the part of both North American and Soviet investigators. This study in human historical geography represents a natural extension of and sequel to Professor Gibson's earlier book, *Feeding the Russian Fur Trade: Provisionment of the Okhotsk Seaboard and the Kamchatka Peninsula, 1639-1856* (Milwaukee, Madison, and London, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969). In *Imperial Russia in Frontier America*, the author continues his thorough treatment of supply problems, extending the discussion to Alaska, Hawaii and Russian California.

As in the Far East, the development of agriculture and cattle raising was made extremely difficult by a whole catalogue of geographical impediments, starting with harsh climate, poor soil and difficult terrain. At the same time, alternative means of supply from Russia proved unreliable and very costly, while co-operation with (and consequent dependence on) more bountiful foreign sources placed the Russian colony at the mercy of its rivals — the trading ships from Boston and the Hudson's Bay Company.

Once the sea otter and fur seal, the major sources of income from Russia's North American holdings, had become depleted, the problem of food supplies became a major consideration in the Russian government's eventual decision to divest itself of its American colonies. Professor Gibson devotes his attention to this fundamental task of provisionment, and how Russian attempts to solve the problem "generated human settlement, resource development, and regional interchange" (p. ix).

The book is divided into four parts. The first, "Occupancy," deals with settlement, exploitation of resources, and supply and provisionment problems. Part II, "Overseas Transport," discusses transport by way of Siberia and round the world by sea. Part III, "Local Agriculture," describes attempts to establish viable farming activity in Alaska, California and Hawaii. Finally, Part IV, "Foreign Trade," gives an account of local trade with Boston ships, the Spaniards, the English and the aborigines. In addition to a selective, but still lengthy, bibliography of primary and secondary sources at the end, the author supplies a list of recommended English-language readings after each chapter for readers who wish to pursue topics in greater detail. Six clearly designed maps and some interesting historical prints enhance the presentation.

The result is a comprehensive and lucid general survey that does not lead to any startling conclusions. Basically, *Imperial Russia in Frontier America* is an elaboration of the geographical reasons for Russia's failure to retain its North American colonies. The author does not ignore other reasons, however, and places geographical factors within the context of Russian weakness in the North Pacific stemming from St. Petersburg's "preoccupation with European affairs and the continental character of tsarist colonial policy" (p. 29). Professor Gibson demonstrates an impressive grasp of factual material from a wide variety of English- and Russian-language sources, many of them previously unpublished, untranslated, or printed in relatively obscure publications.

Regrettably, the book bears signs of undue haste in editing and in the transcription of data from the author's sources, and there may be a stone or two left unturned in his quest to present a comprehensive summary of available concrete information on the economics of provisionment in Russian America.

Let us dispose first of some minor criticisms. In contrast to Professor Gibson's writing as a whole, excerpts translated from Russian sources at times lack lucidity and polish, and have been incorporated with insufficient care. For example, the same passage by Shelikhov appears in the quotation introducing chapter 6 (p. 93) and in the text on page 99 in two variants, neither well rendered. A misspelling of *peredovshchik* (p. 8) survived, uncorrected, from a previous article. The geographical terms "Transbaikalia" and "Preamuria" (p. 71) appear without explanation, although only the former can be readily found in most gazetteers. "Fyodorova" appears also as "Fedorova." The use of anglicized forenames — Basil for Vasily, Nicholas for Nickolay, Lawrence for Lavrenty, and so on (but why not John for Ivan?), while somewhat jarring to this reviewer,

may reflect the policy of the publisher. Be that as it may, it is surely going too far to anglicize Leonty Hagemester (a Baltic German) to "Leon Hagemester," when in this instance "Leonty" is itself a Russified form of "Ludwig"!

Of greater concern are a number of inaccuracies in the one data tabulation I have been able to check, Table 9 (pp. 169-71), "Company Trade with Foreign Ships at New Archangel, 1801-41," which is based in part on Kirill Khlebnikov's *Zapiski o Koloniyakh Rossiisko-Amerikanskoy Kompanii*, Archive of the Geographical Society of the USSR, raz. 99, op. 1, no. 112. Five figures representing cargo sales have been mis-transcribed and six visits by foreign vessels omitted entirely. Moreover, in relation to the same tabulation, somewhat fuller information for the period 1831-1837 is available in the *Records of the Russian-American Company, 1802-1867* (File microcopies of records in the National Archives, no. 11, Washington, 1942).

All in all, *Imperial Russia in Frontier America* is a useful and welcome contribution which requires revision before it can be regarded as authoritative.

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*First Approaches to the Northwest Coast*, by Derek Pethick. Vancouver, J. J. Douglas Ltd., 1976. Pp. xxi, 232, *illus.*, \$12.50.

In less than a decade Derek Pethick, Victoria-born farmer and historian, has written a number of books on the British Columbia experience, including a study of early Victoria, a biography of Sir James Douglas, a story of the career of the steamship *Beaver*, and an interesting collection of personal profiles entitled *Men of British Columbia*. Pethick's audience is popular and general, and his work deserves to be judged as such.

*First Approaches to the Northwest Coast*, his latest volume, chronicles the interest of Russia, France, Spain, Great Britain and the United States in what Edmund Burke called the "distant dominion." Pethick describes in successive chapters the background to white coastal exploration. In turn he deals with Bering's voyages from Kamchatka, Spain's penetrations from California, and Britain's long approaches from the Atlantic (by Cook) and from Asia (by Hanna, Meares and others). He concludes his book with the Nootka crisis, when British and Spanish ambitions for trade and dominion came into conflict but did not end in war. The author