Commentary

A SOVIET SCIENTIST ON THE CANADIAN NORTH*

AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM on the problems of the Canadian Arctic was held in Montreal in September 1963. The symposium was sponsored jointly by McGill University and the Arctic Institute of North America, and among those attending it was the eminent Soviet glaciologist Prof. P. Shumsky, D.Sci. (Geography), who received later an honorary degree of Doctor of Science from McGill University. P. Antonov, correspondent of *Soviet Union Today,* met Professor Shumsky on his return to Moscow and asked him to say a few words about the work of the symposium, his impressions of Canada, and of his meetings with Canadian scientists, public leaders, and ordinary people, to which he replied as follows.

The invitation to Soviet scientists to take part in the symposium on the Canadian Arctic was made in the summer of 1963. We accepted it with pleasure. The Soviet delegation contributed a paper on "The influence of the natural conditions of the Soviet Arctic on the methods of reclamation of its natural resources". The paper dealt with the principles of reclamation work, the specific features of the organization of work in the Soviet Arctic, and methods of development of transport there. I also spoke of the fruitful co-operation between Soviet and Canadian scientists in the exchange of weather data and forecasts.

The paper was received with great attention. This may be explained not only by the general interest but also because the resources of the Soviet Arctic are being used to a far greater extent than those of its Canadian counterpart. The Canadian North, which occupies approximately one half of the territory of the country, is inhabited by only 40,000 persons out of a population of 18 million. In the Soviet Union about one million people live in the High Arctic alone and more than five million people inhabit the forested areas of the Soviet North connected with the Northern Sea Route. This last is a vital waterway that is of great importance for transportation, not only in the domestic, but also in the foreign trade and it serves as a link between East and West. Canada has no route like it. This is explainable partly by the more rigorous natural conditions and partly by the smaller degree of reclamation.

In the Soviet Arctic intensive mining, fishing, and lumbering are carried out and on the whole the resources of the Soviet North are of much greater importance for our economy than those of its northern regions are for those

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of Canada. To the best of my knowledge, of all the great resources of the Canadian North, only oil is extracted for local needs, and gold is mined in the Mackenzie River area and nickel in Labrador. The rich uranium mines, which were actively worked in the 1950's, are almost deserted now.

The large-scale reclamation of the Soviet North was also mentioned by the British scientist Terence Armstrong. We received the impression that a lively interest exists in the Soviet experiences in conquering the Arctic, and that our scientific work is being followed attentively. Armstrong incidentally urged the application of Soviet achievements in Canada.

However, whereas the practical reclamation of the Canadian North has not yet been developed very far, this cannot be said about scientific research. The Canadian scientists have reached a high level as regards the calibre of research and the solution of scientific problems. A very favourable impression is made by the excellent organization of work, good instruments, equipment, and means of transportation. I had an opportunity to familiarize myself with practically all this, of "fingering" everything, as we say in Russia, for I was the first Soviet citizen to visit the Canadian Arctic.

I flew by commercial airline via Edmonton to Uranium City. There I changed to a special plane and, accompanied by Dr. E. F. Roots, co-ordinator of the Polar Continental Shelf Project, visited a number of points in the Canadian North. This Continental Shelf Project is a long-term undertaking, with an extensive research program and well equipped, especially with transport facilities, which include airplanes, helicopters, and various over-snow and amphibious vehicles.

I have especially pleasant recollections of the many meetings I had during my three-week stay in Canada. I remember the warm, friendly atmosphere in the mess room at Mould Bay, a weather station in the Queen Elizabeth Islands. During the conversation somebody asked suddenly who of the persons present was actually a Canadian. It turned out that only the official in charge of the station was a Canadian, the rest were a Russian, an American, a Spaniard, a Pole, an Englishman, an Irishman, and a Scotsman. The American, the station mechanic, invited me to see his "possessions" and gave interesting, detailed explanations. The chief of the station showed us the radar installation that is used to track the radiosondes sent into the upper strata of the atmosphere. When we parted he asked me to convey friendly greetings to the Soviet scientists.

I have already said that I was the first Soviet man in the Canadian High Arctic. Being a polar explorer myself, I expressed my gratitude to Commodore O. C. S. Robertson, Deputy Executive Director of the Arctic Institute of North America, to Dr. E. F. Roots, and also to the Government of Canada, who, realizing the importance of arctic studies and of international exchange of experiences in this field, did their best to make my visit to the Canadian North possible and extremely useful. Thinking back over my trip now, I cannot help feeling that my numerous meetings with Canadians were much warmer than the "cold" arctic scientific problems that brought me to Canada.