

social structure and make decisions by informal methods, the Suenjel Skolts governed themselves by a formal council. Nickul illustrates the operation of this council in a valuable sociological document, the minutes of a meeting at which the Skolts described to Finnish officials their traditional rights and asked that these rights might legally be confirmed.

In spite of the conservative nature of Skolt Lapp culture, it had not remained static. The author, who is vitally interested in culture contact and change phenomena, notes certain tendencies. For instance, we learn that Skolt reindeer breeding had changed somewhat under the influence of Finnish reindeer keepers and that in the 1930's it was a rapidly developing part of the community's economic well-being.

Although Mr. Nickul explicitly abstains from opinions and generalizations, the reader would appreciate them from an astute observer whose long experience with the Suenjel Skolts enables him to speak authoritatively. It would be worthwhile to know, for example, his explanation for such psychological characteristics as the sociability and contented disposition which he found among the Skolts and the reason for the tension which existed between some of the families (see page 52).

Many drawings and 230 superb photographs vividly illustrate the Skolts' mode of living and add considerably to the value of Mr. Nickul's book.

ROBERT N. PEHRSON

THE PROBLEM OF PLACE NAMES IN THE SOVIET ARCTIC

PLACE-NAMES IN THE SOVIET ARCTIC. By TERENCE ARMSTRONG. *Polar Record*, Vol. 5, No. 39 (1950) pp. 408-426.

Since the end of the Second World War the rapid growth of Russian studies in the English-speaking world has greatly increased the need for a uniform system for the transliteration of Russian into English. Ideally, it would seem that an efficient system should seek to represent the sound values of the Cyrillic characters by a consistent and conventional use of the Roman. It is desirable not only that the system should be satisfactory for use both in texts and on maps, but should also yield a product which can be pronounced by English readers. In addition it should be possible for the bibliographer to be able to restore a transliterated form correctly to its original.

The problem of devising such a system is complicated, first, by the phonological dissimilarities of Russian and English, and, to an even greater extent, by the vagaries of English phonetics. As a result a very large number of systems are now in use. In more serious literature Mr. Armstrong has counted "at least ten" systems. Since about 1916¹, some effort has been made in England to achieve uniformity in official usage. Mr. Armstrong notes that recent contributions by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Official Use and by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names hold most promise for the ultimate adoption of a uniform system on both sides of the Atlantic.

The second difficulty which complicates the development of a uniform transliteration system is lexical and grammatical, as opposed to phonetic. Proper names, and, among these, geographical place names, are the words which perhaps most frequently require transliteration. The treatment of foreign place names on maps and in texts is a problem with which geographers have long been vexed. On the peculiarities of Soviet place names, however, no previous literature in English is

¹The Committee on the Transliteration of Slavonic was established by the British Academy in July 1916; Mr. Armstrong, however, does not appear to refer to its work. (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. 8, published by the Oxford Univ. Press)

known to the reviewer. Mr. Armstrong has made a material contribution to this aspect of the problem as it appears in the Soviet Arctic.

The difficulties encountered in the treatment of place names in this region are attributed to the varying origins and structures of the names. A few are derived from the languages of the aborigines, for which the Russians have failed to achieve a uniform Russian form. A considerable number are of Western European origin, testifying to English, Dutch, Austrian, Scandinavian, and American exploration of the region. Many of these are difficult to recognize when transliterated back into English. Despite the fact that many post-Revolutionary changes were tidied up by decree, a few places possess alternative names which are still in use, so that it becomes difficult to establish the preferred name. Some features, notably several arctic coastal seas, possess familiar English names as well as those in use in the USSR.

Thus far these difficulties are probably similar to those arising in the treatment in English of the place names of any foreign country. The author has also catalogued, very thoroughly, the peculiarities of Soviet Arctic place names. Like English names, these frequently consist of specific and generic components. In Russian, however, the form, grammatical relationship, and sequence of these components is not uniform. A number of pleonasm occur, and, in many cases, generics, with or without associated specifics, are used on maps to provide "map information" rather than to indicate a place name. From an examination of these idiosyncrasies of structure and usage, the author proceeds to a concise statement of the problems involved in translation and transliteration of these names.

He then surveys the practice of a number of responsible map-makers on both sides of the Atlantic, including the Admiralty and the Directorate of Military Survey in the United Kingdom, and the Army Map Service, the Hydrographic Office, and the American Geographical and National Geographic Societies in the United States. He finds that there is already a tendency to prefer transliteration of the generic parts of place names, and general agreement on the use of English names for coastal seas. On a number of questions, however, considerable differences in policy still exist, and these he examines in detail.

As a basic principle, the author accepts the use of the locally preferred place name. As he points out, the treatment of Soviet Arctic place names which he suggests incorporates those practices which have already secured some measure of agreement. He appears to be somewhat reluctant in his acceptance of the basic transliteration system jointly approved by the P.C.G.N. and the U.S.B.G.N. in 1947; and, indeed, there is room for improvement in this system. The use of certain modifications to the Roman alphabet which have been developed in Czech would eliminate the need to represent these sounds in English by digraphs and reduce the clumsiness of this system on maps. His glossary (of about one hundred and fifty words) is particularly valuable for the definitions of certain terms used only in the Soviet Arctic, the precise connotations of which can be elusive in the more readily available dictionaries.

The author is probably correct in suggesting that it may be possible to apply his system to place names in other regions of the U.S.S.R., and that the adoption of its fundamental principles by the countries of Western Europe might facilitate the international use of documents concerning the U.S.S.R. Should the appropriate organs of UNESCO direct their attention to the problem of the transliteration of Russian into English, they will find in Mr. Armstrong's work an invaluable discussion of the problem which is as constructive as it is competent.

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