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Challenge to the Poles, by John Grierson

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BOOK REVIEW

CHALLENGE TO THE POLES, by John Grierson. G. T. Foulis & Co., Ltd., London, 1964, pp. 695. Illus. 90 shillings. Published in the United States by Anchor Books, Hamden, Conn. \$15.00.

The world in which we live, with its freedoms and stresses, has been influenced in a most important way by commercial and military aviation. Aviation is merely one chapter in the history of man, whose life and activities have been continually altered as new media of transportation have evolved.

Those who have thought about the effect of aviation on the world have realized that the Arctic regions have an importance to international air transportation that is in great contrast to its lack of importance in matters of commerce (other than its effect on weather which influences all commerce).¹ However, the importance of the Arctic regions to international air transport has been concealed by the fact that Russia has chosen not to participate to the same degree as the major other nations of the world in the network of bilateral agreements that is the basis for the international air routes of today. This has resulted in failure to utilize the Arctic regions for trans-Polar commercial flights to and from the United States and Russia, the Middle East, South Asia and the Orient. Present aircraft and related technical facilities make all this possible with great savings in travel time, as was dramatically illustrated on January 15, 1965, when a 200-passenger Russian TU-114 turboprop airliner made an unscheduled fueling stop at Kennedy Airport, New York. Twice a week since January 1963 such aircraft have been flying the polar route from Moscow to Havana (non-stop, Murmansk to Havana).² Because the great Russian land mass is today virtually impervious to international commercial aviation, trans-Polar flying is not the matter-of-fact activity that trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific flying has become.

The book under review represents the collection in one volume of accounts of major polar aerial explorations and activities, Arctic (including Amundsen, Andrée, Balbo, Balchen, Byrd, Chkalov, Gromov, Levanevsky, Lindbergh, MacMillan, Nobile, Wilkins and others) as well as Antarctic (Byrd, Christensen, Ellsworth and others). The volume weaves together more than fifty-five separate accounts of Arctic and Antarctic aviation activity during the period 1896-1954, in a manner that gives those accounts additional perspective and depth. Few libraries of the world have anything like all those accounts in their collection. The author has the advantage of having carried out in 1934, in a single-engine De Havilland Fox Moth seaplane, a solo flight from Great Britain to Canada, via Greenland. Since 1950 he has been engaged in the sale of aircraft for the De Havilland Division of Hawker Siddeley.

¹ See Cooper, *The Right to Fly* (1947), *passim*, especially the charts following p. 216.

² N. Y. Times, Jan. 16, 1965, p. 1.

On the periphery of the subject of this volume is the legal question of sovereignty in polar areas and in the overlying airspace. Over the years, there have been writings on the subject,³ and some polar nations, including Russia, whose boundaries face the poles, have espoused theories that would accord aspects of sovereignty in the sectors extending from their borders to the North Pole.⁴ As this volume shows, a considerable amount of Arctic flying has taken place despite such theories of sectoral sovereignty.

A great deal of Arctic flying has been carried on by the Russians, and, in his preface (p. 17) the author comments critically on the failure of the Russians to aid him in the preparation of his volume. For a long period of time, and for reasons best known to them, the Russians have disclosed very little about their commercial and military flying in the Arctic. A few sketchy volumes on that subject have appeared,⁵ but more recently, and probably after the manuscript of the present volume was completed, further comments have shown up in foreign language journals. All these are reflected in the eleven volumes of the *Arctic Bibliography*, published since 1953 under the direction of the Arctic Institute of North America. In the 1963 volume of that work, the material cited in Russian exceeded the volume of cited material in English. The opportunity is now present for Mr. Grierson to examine and assimilate that material in as complete and as fascinating a fashion as was done with the material that led to the present volume.

*DeForest Billyou**

³ Eagleton, *International Law and Aerial Discovery at the South Pole*, 1 Air L. Rev. 125 (1930); Smedal, *Acquisition of Sovereignty Over Polar Areas* (1931); Hyde, *Acquisition of Sovereignty Over Polar Areas*, 19 Iowa L. Rev. 289 (1934); Lloyd, *Arctic Air Transport*, 1 Air Affairs 218 (1946); Cooper, *Airspace Rights Over the Arctic*, 3 Air Affairs 517 (1950).

⁴ Lakhtine, *Rights Over the Arctic*, 24 Am. J. Int'l L. 703 (1930); Plischke, *Trans-Polar Aviation and Jurisdiction Over Arctic Airspace*, 37 Am. Pol. Sci. Rev. 999 (1943); Katzenbach, *Shareable and Strategic Resources: Outer Space, Polar Areas and the Oceans*, 53 Proc. Am. Soc. Int'l L. 206 (1959).

⁵ E.g., Vodopyanov, *Wings Over the Arctic* (Moscow, undated).

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