

RUNNING WITH REINDEER: ENCOUNTERS IN RUSSIAN LAPLAND. By ROGER TOOK. London: John Murray, 2003. 365 p., 4 maps, 31 photos, index, glossary in Russian and Saami, selective annotated bibliography mostly of English works. Hardbound. US\$27.50.

Roger Took is a professional art historian and museum curator and a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society in England. He currently spends much of his time in Russia, according to information from the book's press agent, with a multidisciplinary team of social scientists, biologists, and archaeologists. How Took brings his art and museum expertise to that team is not described. Took's introduction to the Kola Peninsula came soon after Russia opened the area to foreigners in the early 1990s. He searched for "adventure... in Europe's last wilderness" (p. 92) by following earlier British adventurers like Edward Rae (1881) to "the White Sea Peninsula... expecting to find the place in much the same condition as when visited by Rae over a hundred years earlier" (p. 158). Took experienced adventure, some of which was inherent in his Kola journey, some of which he manufactured by violating several Russian laws: carrying an illegal weapon, fishing without a permit, entering closed military areas, and exceeding visa restrictions.

Although the title is not accurate, since roughly half of the book is not about Saami reindeer herding, Took does describe a herding brigade at work, and he observed traditional behaviors lost in most of Lapland, including reindeer sledges, tame reindeer, and hand slaughter. Yet, in Lovozero, the Kola Saami center since their forced relocation in the 1920s and 1930s, the author virtually ignored a Saami festival, being somewhat cynical toward the modern "aboriginals." Departing Lovozero by helicopter, he sailed by small boat to remote inland places along the Ponoy River, from Krasnoshchelye to Ponoy Village on the coast. In Krasnoshchelye, Took learned about Komi "invaders" who came to Kola in the 1880s, fleeing reindeer epidemics and human overpopulation in their home across the White Sea. Contemporary ethnographers (e.g., Hallström, 1911) maintained that the Izhemitsky Komi who moved into Saami territory quickly overwhelmed the indigenous population, threatening their very survival. Instead of dying out, however, the Saami intermarried, adopted commercial herding methods, and diversified their economy. These measures facilitated Saami ethnic survival through two world wars, Communist persecution, government boarding schools, and post-Soviet economic collapse.

Later, Took traveled by small boat along the inland waterways that made up the northern portion of the "Kola Trakt," the Medieval trade route from Kandalaksha on the White Sea up the Niva River, through Lake Imandra, and then up the Kola River to the port town of Kola (forerunner of Murmansk as Russia's ice-free port on the Barents Sea). The Kola Trakt employed Saami herders/fishermen who moved passengers and freight along waterways by boat in summer and by sledge in winter, using reindeer transport over portages prior to completion of the railroad in 1916. The route's importance influenced Took to enter a restricted military zone along

Motovskv Gulf, immediately to the west of where the Trakt enters the Barents Sea. Dodging Russian soldiers, the author "had no difficulty imagining [the Bay] as it was sixty years earlier" (p. 96), when it was a diverse Finn/Norwegian/Russian settlement visited in summer by nomadic Saami who came to fish and hunt seal. Instead, the author spied today's transit route for nuclear-powered, Akula class submarines, surrounded by terrain devoid of civilian activity for decades. Later, Took learned from Saami informants in Upper Tuloma village that the idyllic pastoral life he was imagining along the Barents Sea had been destroyed by the Soviet State Security Service in the 1930s and 1940s during the process of collectivization and removal. Nevertheless, he merely hints at the brutality that settlers and Saami alike experienced at the hands of Soviet thugs during that time, when Stalin considered the region so important that he placed Kirov, his right-hand man, in charge.

Leaving the Saami, Took provided a glimpse of how other Kola residents are surviving at a subsistence level in the absence of a planned economy, while trying to develop an independent, free-market society. Took visited descendents of 15th-century Russian maritime settlers called "Pomors," along with those of 20th century voluntary and forced immigrants to the Russian North (the latter rewarded by premium wages and extra vacation in warmer parts of the Soviet Union). In Varzuga village, the author observed the former collective chairman, now a successful entrepreneur, trying to rebuild the enterprise after the failure of the Soviet central economy in the early 1990s. Varzuga has tripled in size since 1987, and there are enough young people to continue for another generation. Guided by the tireless chairman, residents operate a small fleet of fishing trawlers. The catch, together with agricultural products from the former collective farm, provides enough goods to trade with Denmark and Germany for hard currency.

Another illegal visit by the author, to a closed military reserve in Gremikha on the Barents Sea coast, contrasted with the region's previous openness to invading and invited armies alike, especially during the first half of the 20th century. Perhaps at no other location in Russia was the Revolution threatened as it was on Kola, where the multinational (but Britannia-centric) "Interventionists" hoped to put a quick end to the fledgling Red Army. Yet, the initial goal of the Allies was to help the Bolsheviks prevent Murmansk seaports from falling into German-Finnish hands. Disagreement between Soviet authorities in Moscow and Murmansk, with the latter supporting the Allied force presence because they lacked the troops to adequately control Kola, exacerbated the lack of infrastructure by which the "invaders" could move quickly into the interior to engage the German-Finnish army poised along the border. International tensions after the 1918 Armistice resulted in the first "Cold War" between the Communists and the Allies on Kola, characterized by Allied indecision and tension between the "invaders" and the Revolutionary government. A full 18 months passed between landing of the British advance party on Kola in April 1918 and the departure of the last Allied forces. After the White Army surrendered in

1920, the Soviets finally ruled the Murmansk Coast. Continuing the military theme by summarizing World War II operations on Kola, Took also describes the postwar strategic importance of the Barents Sea Coast and recounts his illegal incursion into the Western Litsa submarine base and the Northern Fleet Headquarters at Severmorsk, where he “felt like a spy and the Cold War seemed to be lingering on” (p. 278). He observes that the rotting submarine hulls and dilapidated port facilities perhaps pose more of a radiological hazard now than they ever did as active deterrents to nuclear war. Neglect, combined with intentional mishandling of nuclear materials (e.g., reactor dumping and plutonium theft), may ultimately close Kola and the Arctic Ocean to all humans.

Following completion of the railroad from Kandalaksha on the White Sea to Murmansk in 1916 came the event that shaped the ecology of today’s Kola region perhaps more than any other. A Soviet scientific expedition was sent to the north in 1920 to determine how best to exploit the region’s vast natural resources. Accidentally, the expedition’s geochemist discovered prized minerals in the Khibiny Massif, located on the eastern shore of Lake Imandra. At the time, when the entire settlement around the lake consisted of the Russian telegraph and railroad stations and a few Saami huts, expedition members could not have dreamed that their findings would result in the cities of Apatity, Monchegorsk, and Kirovsk. The expedition’s unlikely dream turned into Kola’s nightmare, as this part of the peninsula became a site of tremendous human misery. Hundreds of thousands of war prisoners, dissidents, displaced landowners, and others were forced to give their lives (many literally) to build the infrastructure needed to exploit these resources. In addition, the Lake Imandra region became one of the most polluted in the world. In a later chapter, the author describes the environmental implications for the Barents Sea region.

The book’s publication quality is excellent, although a lack of chapter numbers adds to the confusion of its organization, which seems both geographically and chronologically disjointed. Chapters include historical summaries (many based on a single source, e.g., Ingold, 1976) supplemented by informant interviews, which allow the author to reconstruct the history of particular localities. Photographs illustrate both the historical and modern appearance of the peninsula. Generally the maps are very good (and necessary to follow the author’s movements)—fixing Lapland in Europe, illustrating the physical and cultural geography of Russian Lapland, showing medieval trade routes, and defining pre-Revolutionary Saami land tenure on the Kola Peninsula. The map “Saami Territories of Eastern Lapland” presents information not available elsewhere, but it contains a serious error that should not be cited in scholarly works. On the map’s legend, Took refers to the Saami territories as “payks,” defined as “agreed claims by a group of families to land and water for logging, grazing, hunting and fishing” (p. x). Unfortunately, the author misused the slang Kildin Saami expression *payk*: it means “a part of the whole” or “a share” and is used in phrases such as “the payk I was born in” or “northern payk” (Kuruch et al., 1985). Took should have referred to the Russian term *pogost*

(village), which was both a territorial unit and a socioeconomic community that contained several extended families, each of which inherited pasturage and fishing lands in common. *Pogosts* were also endogamous marriage units, with up to 50% of Saami marriages occurring within a *pogost* (Kuropyatnik, 1992:2). Took’s *pogost* boundaries are conjectural, but appear generally correct. For example, the three *pogosts* in the Lake Imandra region on Kola were Babinski in the south, Yekostrov in the center, and Masel in the north (Y.Y. Patsiya and N. Gutsol, Kola Science Center, Apatity, pers. comm. 2003), and these are illustrated appropriately on the map. As in other parts of Sapmi (Lapland), where there is confusion between indigenous forms of Saami socioeconomic organization (like the *sita*) and modern, state-imposed forms (called by ‘village’ in Swedish or *paliskunta* ‘association’ in Finnish), the *pogost* has been used for perhaps centuries as the basic unit of Saami herding society on Kola.

Except perhaps for selected historical summaries in undergraduate courses when reading larger volumes is not possible, the book is not recommended for educational use. Scholars will have difficulty using the material as well, especially since there are virtually no citations. For those who have been to Kola, or are planning to go, the book will supplement other readings and provide some sense of the logistical problems there. Caution is urged, however, about following Took’s reckless disregard for the law and authority. For armchair explorers, or those seeking a comparative flavor for their own Arctic experiences, this book will make good fireside reading.

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