

of popular culture. The concept of piracy is shown as nuanced throughout history in terms of its definition, people engaged, and their characteristics (like gender and race). He points out that the catch-all English-language term “pirate” subsumes many varieties and shades of meaning in Chinese.

Nautical aspects of the story, such as the evolution of vessels or naval organization and tactics, are virtually non-existent throughout the book. It would be useful to have more specific information on the vessels mentioned, whether merchant or warship, and with basic specifications, which would add an important dimension. There is little differentiation between British (RN) and East India Company (EIC) ships, which obscures important details. The work is a compilation of nine of the author’s academic journal articles published over a two-decade career that has been devoted to piracy, plus two chapters to update this scholarship. The book’s physical production, using acid-free paper, is well laid out and comfortable to read. The bibliography lists works on the political, economic and social history of piracy from Chinese, Western (English and Portuguese), and Japanese sources. Graphics include simple but effective line-drawn maps and charts of the Pearl River Delta approaches to Canton that show its labyrinthine nature. Facsimiles are helpful, such as a Qing Dynasty fishing license (27). Illustrations are mostly reproductions of photographs and drawings from contemporary newspapers. Many facsimiles of drawings and photographs show lurid depictions of beheadings, torture and other acts of brutal violence against captured pirates.

The glossary contains Romanizations for the names of common terms, people, and places, as well as equivalents in Chinese characters. Definitions would be useful for Romanized terms infrequently encountered in the text or peculiar to that place and time, like “yamen,” “country ship,” “Hong,” “Consoo,” and “hoppo.” The inclusion of Chinese script in the glossary provides a useful beginning for readers trying to extend study into Chinese sources. This book deserves to be read by students of China or the history of trade.

Ian Dew

Thunder Bay, Ontario

Boyd, Andrew. *Arms for Russia and the Naval War in the Arctic, 1941–1945* Seaforth Publishing, 2024

576 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index
ISBN 9781399038867 (hardcover and e-book) £35.00

On 22 June 1941, Winston Churchill took to the airwaves to address the

British people. The subject of his broadcast was Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, which their armed forces had launched earlier that day. After acknowledging his longstanding opposition to the communist regime that had ruled Soviet Russia since 1917, the prime minister announced his government's wholehearted support nonetheless for the Russians against their common foe, pledging "any technical or economic assistance which is in our power, and which is likely to be of service to them" (Robert R. James, ed., *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897–1965* [Chelsea House Publishers, 1974], 6:6430).

This declaration heralded the initiation of a massive campaign of material aid for Britain's new ally. Over the next four years, millions of tons of supplies poured into the Soviet Union from tanks and planes to raw minerals and refined petroleum products. Nearly a quarter of this bounty was delivered by ships traversing the hazardous Arctic route, where they risked attack by German naval and air forces. Protecting them strained the resources of an already overstretched Royal Navy, which shepherded the convoys as they journeyed to the ports of Murmansk and Archangel. The First Sea Lord during this period, Dudley Pound, was not alone in regarding the Arctic convoys as a "millstone" that was not worth the effort necessary to transport materiel on a route plagued by frigid temperatures, icy storms, and periods of extended darkness as well as Germans bombs and torpedoes. All of this made for what Andrew Boyd regards as "the Royal Navy's most difficult and dangerous sustained commitment of the war at sea" (1), yet he regards that commitment as vital to incorporating the Soviet Union into the Anglo-American grand strategy of defeating the Third Reich through a combination of containment and attrition. To demonstrate this, he undertakes a thorough analysis of the convoy campaign, one that situates it within the overall panorama of British operations and evaluates its contribution to the Soviet war effort.

Boyd begins this analysis with an assessment of the Royal Navy's capabilities at the start of the campaign. The best yardstick for this was the concurrent effort to resupply Malta, which served as an important precursor to similar operations further north. Unlike in the Atlantic, where German U-boats were the predominant threat, convoys to Malta faced both frequent air attacks and the possibility of sorties by Italian surface forces. Many of the lessons for convoy defense drawn from these operations, most notably the value of having aircraft carriers as part of escort, were transferrable to the Arctic. Transferring the carriers themselves proved far more challenging. Waging a naval war on a global scale left the navy desperately short of the ships they needed to conduct operations effectively, often requiring a juggling act with other fronts. With heavy losses in the Mediterranean and the destruction of Force Z off Malaya

in December 1941, the Admiralty was hard pressed to provide enough ships to protect the early PQ convoys to Russia.

Fortunately for those convoys, the initial threat they faced was minimal. Among the strengths of Boyd's book is his incorporation of the German perspective into his narrative. Thanks to the dual demands of Operation Barbarossa and the North African campaign, German airpower was similarly stressed, making convoy interception a low priority for the Luftwaffe. While that mission was the primary focus of the Kriegsmarine, the commander of the submarine fleet, Karl Dönitz, preferred to send his boats into regions richer in targets. This increased the burden on the surface fleet, which despite the lack of suitable support facilities for the capital ships, was deployed to Norway over the course of 1942. It was only with the faltering of Germany's initial effort on the Eastern Front and the search for ways to hobble Soviet reinforcement that significant numbers of planes and U-boats were diverted to the theater to intercept the convoys.

By the summer of 1942, the greater German commitment began to take its toll. Their employment of combined arms attacks reached its apogee with the disruption of PQ 17, an episode to which Boyd devotes considerable attention. Yet the Germans were unable to duplicate that achievement, as the increasing attrition of their surface and air forces made sustaining such attacks impossible. With the growing success of Allied forces in the Mediterranean in 1943, the Royal Navy was able to transfer more resources to the Arctic to defend the JW convoys. This contributed both to the destruction of the remaining German battlefleet and the checking of their air strike forces, reducing the German threat by the summer of 1944 primarily to U-boat attacks that offered only a limited rate of return.

Though the aid by then was no longer as vital to the Soviet war effort, it still contributed to the Allies' ultimate goal of "wearing down" Germany. In this respect, the Royal Navy's protection of the convoys was not just their most challenging mission of the war but possibly their most vital one as well. Boyd does a magnificent job of detailing the full scope of this effort, from resource allocation to the role played by Ultra intelligence in the decision-making process. Drawing as it does upon considerable research in British archives as well as the extensive English-language literature on the Arctic convoys and the recent scholarship on the Soviet wartime economy, it offers a re-evaluation of their contribution to the war that nobody with an interest in the subject can ignore.

Mark Klobas
Phoenix, Arizona