

NOTES ON THE NORTHERN SEA ROUTE

by

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Hydrographical charts and navigation marks. —

Prior to the creation of the Central Board of the Northern Sea Route, little modern hydrographical survey had been completed except in the Barents Sea and along the direct routes to the Ob' and Yenisei rivers. This was due to economic reasons and lack of funds; vessels made soundings on their courses, but the results were difficult to coordinate. With the creation of the Northern Sea Route, the Hydrographic Institute was placed under its authority, funds were forthcoming, and a detailed programme of work covering several years was planned.

Since 1933 all the entrances from the west to the Kara Sea have been completely re-surveyed, charts redrawn, and navigation marks set up at critical points. The same applies to the greater part of the Kara Sea itself, especially west of Dickson Island. East of this point charts were unreliable up till 1937, when a number of hydrographical expeditions took place: (a) to the Nordenskiöld archipelago and west of the Taimir peninsula; (b) to Vil'kitski Strait and to the north-east part of the Kara Sea, work undertaken by the ice-breaker *Malyguin*; (c) to the Laptev and East Siberian Seas by Sedov, concentrating on the route from Vil'kitski Strait to Sannikov Strait; (d) to Sannikov Strait itself by *Sadko* ⁽¹⁾; (e) along the Yakutian coast-line; and (f) in the neighbourhood of Chaunskaya Bay. It would seem that a considerable amount of work remains to be done in these eastern waters before modern charts can be prepared, though they may well be published for the southern shores. Up-to-date charts have been printed of the Arctic seas west of long. 85° E., but the state of progress east of this meridian is not known.

Navigation marks, lights, and D.F. stations have been set up through all the straits regularly used on the route, and instruction books are available to mariners. The courses of the Ob', Yenisei, and Lena have also been fully charted. But pilots are necessary. The development of the Pyasina, Khatanga, Anabar, Yana, Indigirka, and Kolim was ordered in the Second Five Year Plan, and seven hydrological expeditions were sent out in 1935 to operate for two and, in some cases, for three years. The Pyasina and the Khatanga were first navigated in 1935, the Yana is now navigable as far as the Moma tributary, the Kolima for a long distance; the Anabar was said to be navigable by an expedition that examined it in 1936. None of these rivers is however navigable for sea-going vessels, except the Ob' and Yenisei, the latter for about 300 miles as far as Igarka, so that transhipment for all the others must take place at their mouths.



(1) It is not known how much of this work was completed before *Sadko* was set fast in the ice and the others were diverted to her assistance.