



An Environmental History of Russia (Studies in Environment and History)

By Paul Josephson, Nicolai Dronin, Ruben Mnatsakanian, Aleh Cherp, Dmitry Efremenko, Vladislav Larin

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The former Soviet empire spanned eleven time zones and contained half the world's forests; vast deposits of oil, gas, and coal; various ores; major rivers such as the Volga, Don, and Angara; and extensive biodiversity. These resources and animals, as well as the people who lived in the former Soviet Union - Slavs, Armenians, Georgians, Azeris, Kazakhs and Tajiks, indigenous Nenets and Chukchi - were threatened by environmental degradation and extensive pollution. This environmental history of the former Soviet Union explores the impact that state economic development programs had on the environment. The authors consider the impact of Bolshevik ideology on the establishment of an extensive system of nature preserves, the effect of Stalinist practices of industrialization and collectivization on nature, and the rise of public involvement under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, and changes to policies and practices with the rise of Gorbachev and the break-up of the USSR.

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Editorial Review

Review

"An Environmental History of Russia is the most important English-language environmental study of the former Soviet Union since Douglas Weiner's *Models of Nature* and *A Little Corner of Freedom*. Spanning geography; nature preservation; urban, industrial, and agricultural environments; and policies, practices, and pollution the book provides a broad sweep of a country's environmental heritage little known in holistic terms. This is worthwhile reading."

Martin V. Melosi, Department of History, University of Houston

"In this ambitious and wide-ranging book, six talented senior scholars draw on newly opened archives to trace the politics of resource extraction and environmental degradation in Russia and the Soviet Republics, from Bolshevism through the breakup of the Soviet empire. While they present an extreme example of state-led environmental degradation, the story they tell is disturbingly similar to what is still being played out around the globe. A chilling and fascinating account."

Judith Shapiro, American University, author of *Mao's War against Nature*

"This group of scholars has tackled the enormous task of surveying the environmental history of the Soviet Union from Lenin to Gorbachev and beyond. The results are impressive and will find a wide audience, given the global historical importance of the largest communist country. Historians are bound to grapple with the authors' assertion that the Soviet Union's environmental history resembled similar developments in Western Europe and North America. This book will be a standard text for many years to come."

Thomas Zeller, University of Maryland, College Park

"... provide[s] an insightful postmortem on the Soviet Union's environmental policies and practices ... a well-written, comprehensive account, valuable for Russian or environmental history collections ... Highly recommended. Upper division undergraduates through researchers/faculty."

Choice

"... provides important new perspectives that will be of interest and use to all scholars of Russian history. It will be invaluable in particular as an introduction to Russian environmental history for a broad spectrum of readers from undergraduate students to seasoned scholars."

Brian Bonhomme, Canadian Slavonic Papers

"... connoisseurs of the damage perpetrated by human folly on the natural world in the name of progress will greatly appreciate this book ... A study of the Soviet Union's environmental history (most of the book covers the Soviet period) is much needed, and the authors are to be acknowledged for producing this volume."

David Moon, European History Quarterly

About the Author

Paul Josephson is Professor of History at Colby College. A specialist in big science and technology in the twentieth century, he is the author of nine books on the history of science and technology and on human-nature interactions.

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