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Producing Power: The Pre-Chernobyl History of the Soviet Nuclear Industry (Inside Technology)

Sonja D. Schmid

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Sonja D. Schmid : Producing Power: The Pre-Chernobyl History of the Soviet Nuclear Industry (Inside Technology) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Producing Power: The Pre-Chernobyl History of the Soviet Nuclear Industry (Inside Technology):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. This is the best account of multiple perspectives on what happened in Chernobyl By Patrick Roberts This is the best account of multiple perspectives on what happened in Chernobyl. This book also offers a riveting illustration of approaches to science, technology, and the engineering profession in the

Soviet nuclear industry.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. M20thCgirlBy deniseHonestly I haven't read it yet, but in browsing through it, looks very interesting. This is minor, I love it when books are printed on smooth heavy paper which like this one.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I particularly liked it as a case study of the planning process ...By David MongerA very interest approach to the Chernobyl disaster and the Soviet nuclear industry generally. I particularly liked it as a case study of the planning process in the later Soviet era.I would like to have seen the author flesh out more some of the ideas presented, such as the socio-technological aspects. I also thought the chapter on the disaster itself needed just a bit more detail - I still didn't understand some of the technical aspects by the end so ended up having to look it up elsewhere.

The Chernobyl disaster has been variously ascribed to human error, reactor design flaws, and industry mismanagement. Six former Chernobyl employees were convicted of criminal negligence; they defended themselves by pointing to reactor design issues. Other observers blamed the Soviet style of ideologically driven economic and industrial management. In *Producing Power*, Sonja Schmid draws on interviews with veterans of the Soviet nuclear industry and extensive research in Russian archives as she examines these alternate accounts. Rather than pursue one "definitive" explanation, she investigates how each of these narratives makes sense in its own way and demonstrates that each implies adherence to a particular set of ideas -- about high-risk technologies, human-machine interactions, organizational methods for ensuring safety and productivity, and even about the legitimacy of the Soviet state. She also shows how these attitudes shaped, and were shaped by, the Soviet nuclear industry from its very beginnings.Schmid explains that Soviet experts established nuclear power as a driving force of social, not just technical, progress. She examines the Soviet nuclear industry's dual origins in weapons and electrification programs, and she traces the emergence of nuclear power experts as a professional community. Schmid also fundamentally reassesses the design choices for nuclear power reactors in the shadow of the Cold War's arms race. Schmid's account helps us understand how and why a complex sociotechnical system broke down. Chernobyl, while unique and specific to the Soviet experience, can also provide valuable lessons for contemporary nuclear projects.

Absolutely the most thorough book on Chernobyl, with unmatched research, a sharp sociological vision, and concern with organizational power. A must. (Charles Perrow, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Yale University)Sonja Schmid has written a revealing book based on meticulous research. Her analysis of Soviet reactor choice before Chernobyl is detailed and persuasive. Her argument that the Soviet experience has to be incorporated into our broader understanding of the nuclear industry is both convincing and important. (David Holloway, Raymond A. Spruance Professor of International History, Stanford University; author of *Stalin and the Bomb*)Offering a sophisticated reading of previously unexplored sources, Schmid masterfully steers readers through the political, technical, and organizational complexities of the Soviet nuclear industry. Her subtle interpretation of the Chernobyl disaster offers not only a fresh look at Soviet history, but also a significant rethinking of the roots of any nuclear disaster. A major achievement. (Gabrielle Hecht, Professor of History, University of Michigan; author of *The Radiance of France and Being Nuclear*)A fascinating analysis of the Soviet Union as a technocratic state, viewed through the lens of both the failures and the successes of its nuclear industry. (Naomi Oreskes, Professor of the History of Science, Harvard University)About the AuthorSonja D. Schmid is Assistant Professor in the Department of Science and Technology in Society at Virginia Tech.