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*Environmental Problems in
the USSR:
The Divergence of
Theory and Practice*

JOHN M. KRAMER

The effective management of the economy is incompatible with the capitalist system. This is manifested most clearly by the vast amount of environmental degradation in most capitalist countries. It is clear that within the framework of a capitalist economy there is no point in even raising the question of the management of the environment on a nationwide scale. But such a formulation is logical and necessary in conditions of a planned socialist economy.

Voprosy ekonomiki, no. 10 (October 1972), 74.

SOVIET COMMENTATORS often argue that the capitalist system is incapable of halting such adverse consequences of industrialization as environmental degradation. They view capitalist systems as having a "spontaneous" mode of development wherein no one is concerned with the interests of society as a whole. The capitalist entrepreneur supposedly is interested solely in maximizing profits and indifferent to the damage that his activity may inflict on the environment.

The Soviets do not deny that the Russian environment has also experienced some deterioration as a consequence of industrialization. However, they do suggest that the socialist system is far superior to its capitalist counterpart in controlling and minimizing the adverse consequences of industrialization—even if it cannot completely eliminate them.

The socialist system has supposedly attained this superiority because it is a monolithic entity that pursues the “true” interests of society and thereby can formulate public policy that ensures environmental quality. Since the means of production in a socialist system are state owned, socialism is not hindered by that divergence of interests between society and individual producers that supposedly makes the effective management of the environment under capitalism almost impossible. Rather, all economic and political actors in the USSR are said to subordinate any parochial interests that they might have to pursue the broader interests of society as embodied in national economic plans.

The following analysis examines the validity of the Soviet argument by focusing on various aspects of environmental disruption in the USSR. Our examination suggests that the reality of the Soviet system differs substantially from the theory of a centrally planned monolithic state pursuing the “true” interests of society. In particular, government bureaucracies in the Soviet Union appear to be the functional equivalent of the capitalist entrepreneur who greedily pursues his private gains to society’s detriment. The Soviets have in fact tacitly recognized that a divergence exists between theory and practice, and have labeled the phenomenon “departmentalism.”¹ In Soviet usage, the term refers to the tendency of bureaucracies to formulate and pursue policies from their own narrow functional perspective and ignore or devote insufficient attention to the interests of the system as a whole.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION IN THE USSR

The Soviet Union is in the midst of a severe water crisis.² Cer-

¹ For a typical criticism of the phenomenon of “departmentalism,” see B. Bogdanov, “Conservation and Economics,” *Ekonomika selskogo khozyaystva*, no. 2 (February 1970) in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press* (hereafter referred to as *CDSP*), 22 (June 9, 1970), 9.

² *Pravda*, May 13, 1971, 3, provides a general discussion of this problem.

tain areas of the country are experiencing substantial water shortages, including the Urals, the southern Ukraine, the north Caucasus, and the central Black Earth region.³ These shortages have caused serious dislocations in the economy and have frequently prevented the further expansion of agricultural and industrial capacities.⁴ Water pollution has played an important role in creating such shortages because many bodies of water are so choked with sewage as to be unusable even for industrial purposes.

The USSR Academy of Sciences estimates that almost 100 million cubic meters of completely unpurified sewage daily enters Russia's waterways.⁵ This figure represents an increase in the amount of unpurified sewage of almost 90 percent as compared to 1959.⁶ Actually the total amount of water pollution is considerably higher than the Academy of Sciences' estimate, which considered only the amount of *completely* unpurified sewage. In fact, even water that has undergone purification frequently contains a significant amount of wastes.⁷

Many of Russia's most famous waterways have been especially hard hit by water pollution. The Caspian-Volga Basin, for example, receives more than ten billion cubic meters of unpurified sewage annually.⁸ One source estimated that if all of the unpurified wastes that daily entered the Volga were put in railroad tank cars, the resulting train would stretch from the White to the Black seas!⁹

Such major arteries as the Northern Dvina, the Dnepr, and the Oka are increasingly clogged with wastes. A Soviet commentator facetiously noted that there is a wonderful restaurant on the banks of the Oka. There, he reported, "you will be served a royal dish: carp with a 'rose' aroma, perhaps, or a pike with a 'magnolia' scent.

³ M. Loiter, "Economic Measures for the Rational Utilization of Water Resources," *Voprosy ekonomiki*, no. 12 (December 1967), 76.

⁴ *Selskaya zhizn*, May 19, 1970, 3.

⁵ *Izvestia*, June 27, 1970, 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, April 14, 1959, 2.

⁷ Thus, in 1968 approximately one-third of all waste water underwent treatment that removed only 40 percent of the impurities, while only 10 percent of the waste water received biochemical treatment that removed 80-95 percent of the impurities. *Nauchno-tekhnicheskiye obshchestva SSSR* (February 1968), in *Joint Publications Research Service* (hereafter referred to as *JPRS*), no. 45,666 (June 1968), 12.

⁸ *Izvestia*, July 9, 1968, 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, June 10, 1967, 3.

You can have still tastier dishes! Perch cooked in benzene, breme in kerosene, or turbot in first class lubricating oil."¹⁰

Beautiful bodies of water such as Lake Ladoga and Lake Baikal have also experienced considerable pollution. Pulp and paper combines have especially polluted Lake Ladoga. The color of the lake's water is often a rust hue "as far as the horizon . . . and even farther with a good wind." The lake's bottom is covered with a layer of fiber more than 2.5 meters deep.¹¹ Lake Baikal, the home of many unique flora and fauna, is also heavily polluted by the Baikalsk Cellulose Combine. Between 1967 and 1969, there were almost 2,000 recorded instances of the plant's sewage exceeding the maximum permissible norm. As a result of the pollution, scientists note that in the water near the Baikalsk plant the amount of flora and fauna has decreased by one-third to one-half.¹²

Naturally, the heavily industrialized areas of the Soviet Union have suffered the greatest water pollution. Yet even the remote Central Asian republic of Kazakhstan has a significant pollution problem. A number of the republic's rivers are said to be completely devoid of living matter. In fact, many of Kazakhstan's water bodies are so polluted that they cannot even be used for irrigation.¹³

The authorities have focused a good deal of their attention on Russia's water crisis and have devoted less attention to the nation's air-pollution problem, in part because it is smaller in scope. The absence of a large number of automobiles in the Soviet Union helps to prevent atmospheric pollution from assuming the dimensions of Russia's water pollution.

Yet, in some areas of the country, air pollution has reached alarming proportions. Steel and chemical plants are among the heaviest polluters; their discharges are said to "rise luxuriantly from the smokestacks, painting the sky a rusty color."¹⁴ The residents of Volkhava are periodically subjected to "gas attacks" from an aluminum plant that "continually belches clouds of sulfur and flouride gases."¹⁵ At the center of many of Russia's largest cities the content of silicon dioxide is two to two and one-half times greater than

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, April 15, 1965, 2.

¹¹ *Pravda*, Nov. 15, 1966, 2.

¹² *Ibid.*, Feb. 16, 1969, 1.

¹³ *Kazakhstanskaya pravda*, Nov. 18, 1971, 3.

¹⁴ *Literaturnaya gazeta*, June 14, 1972, 11.

¹⁵ *Pravda*, July 4, 1966, 2.

the maximum permissible concentration. Air pollution is continuing to grow not only in large urban centers but even more so in small cities where efforts to control it are frequently nonexistent.¹⁶

The Party Central Committee and the Council of Ministers have responded to this growing pollution problem by promulgating several legislative acts and decrees. Thus the regime has formulated all-union legislation on water use as well as decrees to improve the environmental regime of Lake Baikal, the Caspian Sea, and the Volga-Ural Basin. While the regime has not yet promulgated all-union legislation on air pollution, several legislative acts regulate atmospheric emissions by industrial enterprises.¹⁷

Industrial ministries and enterprise managers have frequently frustrated the realization of these central directives. Ironically, the imperatives of Soviet development plans work against enterprises and ministries observing pollution regulations. In the Soviet Union quantitative fulfillment of plan targets determines an enterprise's success, and bonuses and premiums are based upon quantitative criteria. Ministries and industrial managers are, therefore, reluctant to engage in any activity which diverts them from achieving plan targets. Unfortunately for the environment, the imperatives of the plan often conflict with the needs of a sound antipollution policy. One harried industrialist graphically illustrated the tension between the plan and the environment when he exclaimed, "You think we do not see? But what is to be done? . . . What about the plan? Are you going to order the plants to stop? That is the dialectic. One has to choose between civilization and one's love of nature."¹⁸

Because of the need for plan fulfillment, ministries have done little to purify industrial wastes. First, they have allocated few funds for the research and design of advanced purification equipment. Even the purification system of the Baikalsk Cellulose Combine, supposedly the most advanced in the country, has serious technological deficiencies.¹⁹ Inspectors making a random check of

¹⁶ N. Koronkevich, "The Water Problem Can Be Solved," *Seriya nayka o zemle* (*Berech i Umnozhat Prirodnie Bogatstva*), no. 8-9 (1970), in *JPRS*, no. 51,609 (October 1970), 11, 18.

¹⁷ See, for example, Article 21 of the *Principles of Public Health*, *Izvestia*, Dec. 29, 1969, 3-4.

¹⁸ *Pravda*, June 26, 1970, 3.

¹⁹ *Komsomolskaya pravda*, Aug. 11, 1970, 4.

purification equipment found that almost all of the installations had "structural imperfections."²⁰ The creation of advanced air-purification equipment has especially suffered from the neglect of industrial ministries. Thus, the All-Union Gas Purification and Dust Removal Association, the only all-union body conducting research into the causes and effects of air pollution, has been severely hampered by being attached first to the USSR Ministry of the Chemical Industry and currently to the USSR Ministry of the Petroleum Refining and Petrochemical Industry. The following quotation indicates the manifold difficulties that this organization has experienced:

The association's research facilities are developing extremely slowly, as for its design facilities they have been in a frozen state for many long years. At present the association is able to fulfill only an insignificant part of the most necessary design and research projects.²¹

Second, industrial ministries devote few funds to actually building purification installations, preferring instead to increase production capacities. The result is that in 1967 between 60 and 75 percent of all industrial sewage was not treated at all,²² while in 1968, 60 percent of the enterprises that polluted the air had no purification installations whatsoever.²³ Further, in their eagerness to have plants put into operation as quickly as possible, ministries engage in the common practice of planning the construction of decontamination installations as a second or even a third stage, after the main shops have already worked full-blast for years. Nobody appears to be concerned that such practices violate the laws on conservation.²⁴

Third, enterprise managers do not always utilize funds for purification installations, even when ministries have allocated such funds.²⁵ Managers know that so long as they fulfill plan targets their grateful ministries will not complain about unutilized funds for purification equipment. In fact, many protective ministries even

²⁰ *Rabochaya gazeta*, June 27, 1969, 4.

²¹ *Pravda*, March 24, 1969, 3.

²² *Ekonomicheskaya gazeta*, no. 4 (1967), 37.

²³ V. Shkatov, "Prices on Natural Resources and Improvement of Planned Price Formation," *Voprosy ekonomiki*, no. 9 (September 1968), 67.

²⁴ For example, Article 4 of the Russian Republic conservation law stipulates that "it is forbidden to put into operation enterprises, shops, and installations that discharge sewage without carrying out measures that will ensure the purifying of it." *Pravda*, Oct. 28, 1960, 1.

²⁵ *Izvestia*, March 2, 1973, 3.

give enterprise managers bonuses by way of "compensation" if the latter are fined by the courts for pollution violations.²⁶

A January, 1973, joint decree of the Party Central Committee and the Council of Ministers attempted to remedy many of the problems described above.²⁷ The decree called on ministries and departments to substantially increase their efforts to reduce the discharge of industrial wastes. The decree also established a special administration for the design and production of gas purification equipment. Inspectorates will be subordinated to this chief administration to ensure that enterprises properly operate this equipment. This decree gives hope that the Soviet Union will eventually produce a sufficient amount of quality purification equipment to significantly reduce pollution emissions. At present, however, both in quality and quantity, such facilities appear inadequate to meet the task assigned to them.

Industrialists have aggravated the pollution problem and frustrated attempts to solve it in other ways. Thus, ministries frequently construct new enterprises in densely populated areas, despite regulations prohibiting such practices.²⁸ The ministries do so, of course, because it is cheaper to build in a large urban center where such things as a transportation network already exist. The result of such practices, however, is that the "people in these districts cannot open their windows or relax in a square somewhere, for everything around them is covered in soot." On occasion the long-term costs of locating plants in residential areas may exceed any short-term economies derived from such a decision. For example, industrial enterprises so fouled the air of Gubakha that it became impossible to live in the city, and so at considerable cost, Gubakha's entire residential area had to be moved.²⁹

The Soviets have made several efforts to relocate heavily polluting plants to less populated areas.³⁰ Yet many ministries and enterprise directors vigorously resist such efforts. The most obvious reason for their resistance is the expense and inconvenience in-

²⁶ *Pravda*, Aug. 23, 1970, 3.

²⁷ *Izvestia*, Jan. 10, 1973, 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Sept. 18, 1966, 2. The general plan for Moscow prohibits the construction of new facilities or the expansion of existing ones within the city except those needed for direct services to the population.

²⁹ B. Svitlichny, "The City Awaits a Reply," *Oktyabr*, no. 10 (October 1966), in *CDSP*, 18 (Dec. 21, 1966), 15.

³⁰ For several examples see *Izvestia*, Sept. 20, 1972, 2-3.

volved in moving the plant. Further, while the plant must bear the cost of relocation, it does not directly bear the cost of its pollution: the population bears this cost in the form of a threat to public health. Finally, such a move may bring unwanted headaches to the enterprise. If, for example, the plant is relocated to a remote area, it may have difficulty attracting a sufficient labor force. With the existence of such obstacles, the campaign to relocate polluting enterprises will most likely continue to encounter stiff resistance. While this resistance is understandable from the viewpoint of the ministries and enterprises involved, such a "departmental" approach can only aggravate the environmental conditions of Russia's urban centers.

Finally, industrialists have hindered attempts by government inspection agencies to verify the implementation of antipollution regulations. The two primary agencies for dealing with pollution and polluters are the USSR Ministry of Public Health's Sanitary-Epidemiological Service and the USSR Council of Ministers Chief Administration for the Hydrometeorological Service. The Sanitary-Epidemiological Service has been especially ineffective in carrying out its mandate as detailed in the *Principles of Public Health* (1969). According to the *Principles* (Article 21), the Sanitary-Epidemiological Service can halt a plant's operation if its wastes are a danger to public health. The Soviet press contains numerous reports of the difficulties this agency experiences in achieving its assigned tasks. *Izvestia*, for example, reported the case of a cement plant that was spewing great amounts of dust over the surrounding residential area. The local sanitary station informed the plant director that he would have to cease operations unless the situation was remedied, whereupon the plant director "ordered the guards to throw the sanitary inspectors out and keep them off the premises." Later that night the inspectors slipped inside the plant and sealed the furnaces.

When informed of this the Director, right before their eyes, broke the seal with his own hands, and had the inspectors pushed out through the main gate. When reminded that there was a nature protection law that had to be obeyed, the Director declared "There is only one law for me—the production program!"³¹

In reality, the zeal shown by the Sanitary Service in this example is not typical. Since the Service realizes that it does not have the bureaucratic strength needed to enforce its directives, it has usually

³¹ *Ibid.*, Aug. 6, 1971, 3.

adopted a live-and-let-live policy toward any industrial polluters.

The level of air, and especially water, pollution in the USSR has assumed serious dimensions. Such pollution has involved significant costs for society in the form of economic losses, threats to public health, and a deterioration in the quality of the physical environment. The nation's highest decision-making bodies have issued a number of authoritative decrees that attempt to halt the environmental disruption. However, ministries and enterprise managers have frequently defied the directives of central decision-makers. Industrialists have usually been far more concerned with fulfilling plan targets and pursuing private gain than in worrying about the potential damage that their activity may inflict on society.

LAND RESOURCES

An examination of land use in the Soviet Union graphically illustrates the indifference frequently exhibited by government bureaucracies for any goal that extends beyond their own narrow functional task.

The Soviets have become increasingly concerned with the efficient management of their land resources. Although the Soviet Union has almost five million more square miles of land than the United States, much of the land is in remote areas and unsuitable for agricultural or industrial development. The Soviets have therefore been compelled to establish land-use priorities for this resource. *The Principles of Land Legislation* (1968) has given agriculture the highest priority in the use of land.³² Table 1 illustrates why agriculture has received this priority.

TABLE 1
ARABLE LAND PER PERSON IN THE SOVIET UNION AND
SELECTED UNION-REPUBLICS 1958, 1967^a
(IN HECTARES)^b

	1958	1967
All-union Average	1.06	0.95
Azerbaijan	0.45	0.28
Armenia	0.43	0.21
Moldavia	0.83	0.56

^a Source: *Pravda*, Aug. 1, 1968, 2.

^b One hectare equals 2.47 acres.

³² *Pravda*, Dec. 14, 1968, 2. See especially Article 10.

This alarming decline in the arable land fund has made immeasurably more difficult and costly the feeding of the Russian people—a task that the regime, even under the best of circumstances, has never performed well. Despite the critical need for the careful utilization of Russia's land resources, the industrial sector has often engaged in land-use practices that conflict with national priorities.

Hydroelectric projects perhaps best illustrate the indifference of industrial bureaucracies for the needs of agriculture. So far these projects have flooded an area equal to the combined territory of Armenia and Moldavia.³³ Frequently the state invests substantial capital to improve the quality of the land for agricultural use. Yet these expenditures are often wasted because hydroelectric projects then flood much of the land.

Of course, hydroelectric projects must flood some land, but critics contend that planners make no attempt to reduce the flooding area. Planners act in this manner because land has no economic evaluation in the Soviet Union, and therefore no economic incentive exists to conserve the land.³⁴ When planners are compelled to reduce the amount of land to be flooded, they frequently can do so without impairing the efficiency of the hydroelectric project. The problem, then, is usually not that planners are unable to reduce the amount of land to be flooded. Rather, it is that hydroelectric project designers often take a "departmental" approach to their task, considering only the needs of their branch while ignoring the needs of other sectors.

The misuse of land by industrialists also contributes to Russia's pollution problem. Since purifying industrial wastes is expensive, producers often choose to simply dump the wastes on nearby land that they do not pay for. Not only do the rains frequently wash these wastes into streams, but the land itself becomes unusable. The Soviets call these sewage dumps "dead zones," and they are often of enormous proportions.³⁵ Mining enterprises are especially guilty of this practice. For example, the runoff from coal mines has polluted substantial amounts of land. Further, mine trash

³³ *Selskaya zhizn*, July 14, 1970, 3.

³⁴ I have examined elsewhere the adverse impact that the lack of an economic evaluation has on the conservation of Russia's natural resources. John M. Kramer, "Prices and the Conservation of Natural Resources in the Soviet Union," *Soviet Studies*, 24 (January 1973), 364-373.

³⁵ *Pravda*, Feb. 17, 1967, 2. The "deadzone" of just one enterprise covered almost 25,000 acres, much of it formerly irrigated land.

dumps cover thousands of acres of formerly valuable agricultural land.³⁶

Mining operations also despoil the land through open-cut and strip mining. Such methods create what one observer described as a "lunar landscape."³⁷ Throughout the USSR, mining enterprises have "disturbed" (to use the official term) hundreds of thousands of acres in this manner. In addition, open-cut and strip mining contribute to air pollution, because the earth that they displace is formed into loose piles that the wind often sweeps away. Although the *Principles of Land Legislation* enjoins mining enterprises to restore land that they utilize to its original state, few appear to heed this injunction.³⁸ A member of the USSR Academy of Sciences argues that it makes good economic sense to recultivate abandoned mining land because profits from such land soon pay for the expenditures needed to put the land in proper condition.³⁹ However, this argument misses the point. While it may well be that it is profitable from the standpoint of the national economy to restore mined-out land, it certainly is not profitable for the mining enterprises that must perform the recultivation work. This is so because recultivation work is funded by the mining enterprises themselves. Therefore, the mining industry pays for recultivation work, but the agricultural sector derives the benefits of such work.

Finally, the ecological problems experienced by Russia's Black Sea coast area are a most bizarre and revealing illustration of "departmentalism's" impact on the Soviet environment.

The Black Sea is of special significance for most Russians because it is the warmest resort area in the USSR. Russians come there from all parts of the Soviet Union to spend their vacations. The area has recently experienced a building boom to accommodate this influx of visitors.

It is precisely this extensive construction that has been the major source of the problems afflicting the Black Sea coastline. To provide the materials for construction, builders used the pebbles and sand found in abundance along the shore. Since these were "free," the builders naturally preferred them to materials that would have

³⁶ *Trud*, June 28, 1970, 2. In just one area of the Kuzbass region, mining enterprises have polluted almost 75,000 acres.

³⁷ *Literaturnaya gazeta*, May 31, 1972, 10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Aug. 12, 1972, 2.

³⁹ *Trud*, June 28, 1970, 2.

to be shipped from other areas. One source estimates that builders removed 300 million cubic meters of sand and gravel from the beaches along the Black Sea during the postwar years.⁴⁰

Unfortunately for the beaches, the pebbles serve as a buffer against the violent storms that often occur in the area. With the protective pebbles removed, the beaches have experienced erosion of enormous proportions. By 1960, the beach area along the Black Sea coast was reduced by almost 50 percent. In several areas, resort hotels, hospitals, and, perhaps most ironically, the health spa of the Ministry of Defense collapsed as the shoreline receded. In addition, officials fear that the main railroad line will also wash away. Finally, the erosion has led to numerous landslides on the nearby hilly terrain. The landslides have covered roads, destroyed homes, and even threatened the streets of Yalta.

The Soviets have reacted to the problem by passing a law banning the removal of the pebbles from the beach.⁴¹ Yet the builders, far from ceasing their activity, have actually increased their removal of the pebbles. Presumably, local officials have remained indifferent to the removal, if they have not actively colluded with the builders in this process. In the absence of strong administrative controls, the builders themselves continue because they have no economic incentives to stop their operations. While the builders incur no financial losses, the state itself has expended huge sums in an unsuccessful effort to halt the erosion. The Georgian Republic Council of Ministers has formulated a ten-year program to save the Black Sea shoreline that will cost more than \$130 million; the Ministry of Transportation has already spent approximately \$45 million to strengthen the coastline.⁴² The monetary value of the efforts to save the beach far exceeds the value of the beach pebbles as building materials. The lack of an economic evaluation reflecting the true value of the pebbles for nonbuilding purposes has thus resulted in a classic example of "departmentalism" and disruption of the environment.

CONCLUSION

An examination of the Soviet Union's ecological problems must

⁴⁰ Marshall Goldman, *The Spoils of Progress* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1972), 156.

⁴¹ *Pravda*, Feb. 26, 1969, 3.

⁴² Iya Meskhi, "The Sea Threatens," *Ogonyok*, no. 25 (June 1972), 26-27.

evoke among many Western readers a feeling of *déjà vu*. Soviet industrial ministries and enterprise managers behave in a manner that is disturbingly similar to those who despoil the environment in capitalist countries. Industrialists, regardless of political system, appear to be concerned primarily with private gain, and peripherally, if at all, with any ecological damage that they might cause.

Yet according to socialist theory, Soviet industrialists should be infused with a sense of purpose that extends beyond private gain to encompass the true interests of society. Why, then, has there been such a divergence between theory and practice in the Soviet system?

We can attribute this divergence largely to the invalidity of certain assumptions upon which socialist theory is based. First, the theory assumes that there is such a thing as the "true" interests of society and that subsystem actors will subordinate their parochial interests to pursue these. In reality, the Soviet system is dominated by numerous industrial bureaucracies, each of which has a different set of priorities and goals determined primarily by its own functional mandate. While protecting the environment may benefit that nebulous entity known as "society," it is not within the functional scope of most industrialists.

Second, the argument assumes that achievement of the various components of the public interest are not incompatible with one another, but rather that maximizing the attainment of one component furthers the attainment of all. In fact, one cannot make such an assumption. In theory, many would agree that rapid economic growth and protection of the environment are both in the public interest. In fact, however, the pursuit of economic growth, especially in the short run, may adversely affect the quality of the environment. Central decision-makers have in effect frequently confronted Soviet industrialists with incompatible tasks: to fulfill high plan-targets and simultaneously to protect the environment. Most industrialists have chosen primarily to stress plan fulfillment, probably sensing (correctly) that while central decision-makers may have an abstract commitment to environmental quality they are far more concerned with maintaining rapid economic growth.

Finally, the ability of the planners to make cost/benefit calculations that reflect the "true" interests of society assumes that there are universally acknowledged standards against which public policy can be measured. However, such universally acknowledged stan-

dards almost never exist in a public policy debate. Rather, participants in the debate base their arguments on different, but often equally defensible, conceptions of the public interest. In the absence of agreed upon policy standards, policy output largely becomes a function of the amount of political power exerted by the various participants in the debate. Unfortunately for those interested in protecting the Russian environment, the political power of Soviet industrialists often appears decisive in determining the priorities emphasized by the Soviet system.