

Red Gas: Russia and the Origins of European Energy Dependence. By PER HÖGSELIUS. Pp. 294. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2013. \$30.00. Paperback. ISBN: 9781137293718.

Per Högselius's monograph *Red Gas* is a historical enquiry into a complex chain of events that led to the establishment and development of the natural gas pipeline system stretching across Europe. The book's main purpose is to answer the question of how and why Europe's much-publicised dependence on Russian natural gas has come about and what is the nature of that dependency today. A historical study utilising archival sources in five different countries, *Red Gas* produces a perspective of transnational history, a refreshing and informative way of examining a phenomenon to which national histories hardly do justice. Högselius is able to track the development of the gas network through governmental and company archives, the latter of which proved especially enlightening; it is clear that nudges from German and Austrian gas companies were as vital to the project as political favour. The book also analyses the European gas market in the present day, paying special attention to the concept of 'energy weapon' and its historical underpinnings.

The book is divided into twelve chapters, ten of which are detailed chronological analyses of the emergence and development of the East-West natural gas system from the late 1960s all the way to Putin's Russia. Högselius's use of a wide range of archival material allows him to dissect the various interests of governments, individual bureaucrats and energy companies, which is one of the main attractions of the study. For example, the gas exports across the Iron Curtain was partly triggered by the Soviet Union's need for high quality pipes for expanding its domestic gas network. Moreover, exporting to the capitalist bloc was an opportunity for the Soviet gas officials to improve the bureaucratic standing of their trade. In the West, crucial factors that allowed the system to be built ranged from the annulment of a NATO export embargo on large steel pipes to the waning lobbying power of the North German coal industry, all the way to Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik, preferring engagement with the East to isolation. Furthermore, once gas first started flowing, growing demand in Western Europe provided the economic incentives for a number of expansions of the system – exports grew from 1.5 billion cubic meters per year in the early 1970s to 63 bcm in 1991 and 107 bcm in 2004. The two remaining chapters of the book remind the reader of the importance of energy relations in the history of Europe and connect the historical narrative with the present day. Högselius stresses how resilient the system has been to political currents, enduring the occasional pressure from the US and even the collapse of the Soviet Union. The economy of the East-West gas trade was proven during the Cold War.

Of particular interest in *Red Gas* is also the much-debated question of whether Russia, in the option of turning off the taps, possesses an energy weapon pointed at Europe. Interestingly, Högselius finds no evidence of Moscow ever considering such a course of action. The dependency, after all,

worked both ways; eastern gas came to play an important role in the Western Europe's energy supply and the Soviet Union desperately needed the hard currency earned from gas exports (the lack of which eventually contributed to its demise). The Kremlin did see the potential for sowing disunity among NATO countries using energy, but the opportunity was never properly seized. There is more to the story, however. The book concludes that even though the actual strength of the energy weapon was negligible, its perceived existence is clear – system builders in Western Europe did prepare for intentional supply disruptions with storage facilities and alternative suppliers. As for the present day, Högselius argues that the situation has changed little. Despite the significant role energy plays in Russian foreign policy, the actual uses of the energy weapon, as defined above, are limited to post-Soviet countries, which Högselius admits are in a drastically different situation, again, owing to decisions made decades ago.

Red Gas is a fascinating study into the background and nature of Europe's energy dependency on Russian natural gas. The volume benefits from a dispassionate treatment of a commendable breadth of archival sources, producing a prime example of transnational history, rich in present-day relevance. Occasionally, the narrative goes on to describe the minutiae of various meetings and organisational developments to a level of detail perhaps not required by the research questions, but the defect is minor. Everyone interested in energy issues or Cold War history will find this book easily approachable and interesting, bringing depth to a debate often monopolised by think tanks and media.

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