

BOOK REVIEWS

THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST: A Reference Guide for Conservation and Development, Second Edition. By *Josh Newell*. McKinleyville (California): Daniel & Daniel, Publishers, Inc. (in association with Friends of the Earth – Japan). 2004. xx, 466 pp. (Maps, coloured photos, B&W photos, tables.) US\$99.95, cloth, ISBN 1-880284-76-6; US\$59.95, paper, ISBN 1-880284-75-8.

Until the mid-nineteenth century the Russian Far East (RFE), located east of Siberia, was a sleeping giant. Separated from European Russia by several time zones, it had little access to the ice-free sea. Agricultural cultivation was limited, as 75 percent of the land was eternally frozen. In the twentieth century, the giant awoke. Home to the world's largest reserves of oil, gas, precious metals, timber and fish, it supplied the economy of the Soviet Union through the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Baikal-Amur Mainland. Now it is increasingly perceived as a storehouse of resources for the Pacific Rim economies. The publication of this book, edited by Josh Newell, comes at a time when the RFE is attracting increasing international attention. This comprehensive guide describes the RFE's geography and natural resources from the perspective of present and future economic development.

The author's work for NGOs and international development agencies brought him to the RFE and to Japan. The present book is a second edition of *The Russian Far East: Forests, Biodiversity Hotspots, and Industrial Developments* (Tokyo: Friends of the Earth – Japan), which he co-authored with Emma Wilson in 1996. In this new edition, the author has accomplished a gargantuan task of bringing together 90 contributors from Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom. The result of this international and interdisciplinary collaboration is an encyclopedic portrait of the region striving to become a new Mecca for international development.

The book is organized into 11 chapters. The first chapter is an overview of the RFE as a land of sharp contrasts. Despite its economic potential, the RFE has a sparse and declining population. While the RFE's administrative regions enjoy autonomy similar to that of the Canadian provinces, they have never had either enough independence or support from Moscow to develop their own infrastructure. After more than a decade of market reforms, the economy is still based on extracting resources, mainly for export, with very weak domestic manufacturing.

The next ten chapters describe administrative regions of the RFE. According to the authors, the RFE's economy is far from integrated. While mining defines the economies of Sakha, Magadan and Chukotka, fishing is dominant in Kamchatka and Koryakia. Oil and gas supercede fishing in

defining the economy of Sakhalin. Primorsky, Khabarovsk and Amur are diversified economies; yet, mining and timber play an important role there. At least for now, foreign investors in the RFE are more interested in getting access to the natural resources, with or without the rhetoric of sustainable development. Thus, Primorsky and Amur have become prime suppliers of timber to East Asia. Sakhalin is home to multibillion-dollar offshore oil and gas projects funded mostly by US oil companies. Sakha's diamond industry is up for grabs by the Canadian mining industry. At the moment these projects only enrich the Russian elite and international monopolies.

The contributors to this volume are divided over the prospects of sustainable development in the RFE. Power shortages in the cities and deteriorating eco-systems are accompanied by widespread official corruption and local poverty in what should be a land of golden opportunities.

Oceans of data, detailed maps and revealing photos will make this reference guide equally useful to those who want to invest in the RFE or to preserve its environment. Unfortunately, this book costs several months' worth of pension pay in the RFE.

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WHITHER FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS?: Proliferation, Evaluation and Multilateralization. *Edited by Jiro Okamoto. Chiba (Japan): Institute of Developing Economies, JETRO (IDE Development Perspective Series No. 2). 2003. viii, 414 pp. (Tables, figures.) US\$39.00, paper. ISBN 4-258-61002-X.*

Over the past decade, regional trade agreements have proliferated rapidly. Over 190 are in force today. Since many countries in Asia have recently abandoned their purely multilateralist stance and joined the bandwagon of free trade agreements (FTAs), a volume on regional arrangements in the Asia Pacific region is timely. The book, the fruit of a collaborative research project at JETRO's Institute of Developing Economies, presents three theoretical essays, followed by eight case studies analyzing the FTA policies of individual countries. Unfortunately, the book sets off on a weak note with the editor's introduction, which examines the driving forces of the recent, "third wave" of FTAs. Okamoto presents a laundry list of potential causes identified in the literature, but neither attempts to evaluate competing claims nor offers much guidance to the reader. Based on the assumption that global free trade is the ultimate goal, he then outlines the theme guiding the book: How can FTAs be "multilateralized," that is, how can their discriminatory aspects be overcome? Yet as he himself admits, his illustration of mechanisms proceeds "without giving much attention to their practicability" (p. 12).

The other theoretical chapters offer more analytical leverage: Gen Yamamoto contributes an excellent digest of the latest research on FTAs.