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# The Depths of Russia: Oil, Power, and Culture after Socialism

*Douglas Rogers*

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**Douglas Rogers : The Depths of Russia: Oil, Power, and Culture after Socialism** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Depths of Russia: Oil, Power, and Culture after Socialism:

Russia is among the world's leading oil producers, sitting atop the planet's eighth largest reserves. Like other oil-producing nations, it has been profoundly transformed by the oil industry. In *The Depths of Russia*, Douglas Rogers offers a nuanced and multifaceted analysis of oil's place in Soviet and Russian life, based on ethnographic fieldwork

and archival research in the Perm region of the Urals. Moving beyond models of oil calibrated to capitalist centers and postcolonial "petrostates," Rogers traces the distinctive contours of the socialist—and then postsocialist—oil complex, showing how oil has figured in the making and remaking of space and time, state and corporation, exchange and money, and past and present. He pays special attention to the material properties and transformations of oil (from depth in subsoil deposits to toxicity in refining) and to the ways oil has echoed through a range of cultural registers. *The Depths of Russia* challenges the common focus on high politics and Kremlin intrigue by considering the role of oil in barter exchanges and surrogate currencies, industry-sponsored social and cultural development initiatives, and the city of Perm's campaign to become a European Capital of Culture. Rogers also situates Soviet and post-Soviet oil in global contexts, showing that many of the forms of state and corporate power that emerged in Russia after socialism are not outliers but very much part of a global family of state-corporate alliances gathered at the intersection of corporate social responsibility, cultural sponsorship, and the energy and extractive industries.

"Rogers focuses on how things work within oil corporations: how the new oil giants evolved out of Soviet carcasses; how they operate in symbiosis with the state; and, in particular, how they directly shape social and cultural institutions...The intersection of oil, money, and power might be a sexier topic. But the ways in which politicians and corporate bosses redefine and blend roles on the ground—indeed, to the point that Lukoil-Perm assumed the lead in a grand campaign to make the city of Perm a "capital of culture," competing with St. Petersburg—provide more insight into the real texture of everyday."—Robert Levgold, *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2016)"Avoiding easy assumptions about both corporate and state power, Douglas Rogers provides us with a subtle and compelling analysis of the social and political life of oil in post-Soviet Russia. *The Depths of Russia* demonstrates why an attention to the contingencies of geography, history, and politics is vital for all those concerned with the role of the oil industry in the production of culture."—Andrew Barry, University College London, author of *Material Politics: Disputes along the Pipeline*"Oil and gas are central to Russia's economy and international influence. Yet we have precious few studies of how the oil sector is managed and its impact on Russian society at the grassroots level. Through classic anthropological fieldwork Douglas Rogers has produced a book that will be of interest to all observers of contemporary Russia and to scholars of extraction industries in other countries."—Peter Rutland, Wesleyan University, author of *The Politics of Economic Stagnation in the Soviet Union*About the AuthorDouglas Rogers is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Yale University. He is the author of *The Old Faith and the Russian Land: A Historical Ethnography of Ethics in the Urals* and *The Depths of Russia: Oil, Power, and Culture after Socialism*, both published by Cornell.