

Geographic Perspectives on Soviet Central Asia

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GEOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES ON SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA

In a unique survey based on an array of new census data, *Geographic Perspectives on Soviet Central Asia* highlights the region's geographic, economic and ecological problems since 1945.

Painting a grim picture, the book investigates how the combination of rapid population growth and declining per capita investment is causing economic conditions to slide in rural areas and encouraging an ecological catastrophe. The authors discuss the effects of low rural out-migration, and show that at current growth rates the rural working-age population will double with each generation. Unprecedented in a developed country, this is causing the region to become more rather than less rural. Soviet Central Asia is an area of low productivity, and the book considers the lack of support from Soviet central government to the region. Wishing to maximize their return to capital and labor, the government is concentrating its investment in the European West and directing insufficient funds for a growing workforce in Central Asia.

Soviet Central Asia also faces grave ecological problems; the declining level of the Aral Sea, extensive soil salinization and water pollution, all largely due to past attempts at irrigation. The authors consider the effect of these disasters on the area, and look to future possibilities in this very important region of the world.

Geographic Perspectives on Soviet Central Asia is essential reading for students and researchers of human geography, and will be particularly useful to those interested in Soviet nationalities.

Robert A. Lewis is Professor of Geography at Columbia University. The contributors hail from both the West and the USSR, and all have travelled extensively in Soviet Central Asia.



**WILL SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA
SUSTAIN ITS RAPID
POPULATION GROWTH?
ARE THERE SOLUTIONS TO THE
REGION'S ECOLOGICAL CRISIS?**

Geographic Perspectives on Soviet Central Asia surveys the geography of the region and highlights the region's geographic, demographic, economic and ecological problems since 1945. The book is organized around two unifying themes: the prospects for migration of the indigenous population to other regions of the former USSR and their integration with other nationalities. The authors investigate rapid population growth and economic decline; the environmental crisis and the declining level of the Aral Sea; and the extent to which investment in Central Asia has been equalized relative to other parts of the former USSR. Also dealt with are irredentist tendencies in political integration, geographic segregation by ethnic group and its effect on ethnic processes; the effect of the dominance of investment in primary activities; and the demographic effect of agricultural mechanization; and patriarchy and its effect on the workforce.

Robert A. Lewis is Professor of Geography at Columbia University. The contributors are from both the West and Central Asia, and all have travelled extensively in the region.

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