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BOOK REVIEW

Katherine E. Young (Ed.), *Innovation in the Soviet Chemical Industry: Selected Papers with Analysis*, Delphic Associates, Inc., Falls Church, Va., 1987, \$27.50, viii + 194 pp., no ISBN (!).

This book contains the following articles:

- Anonymous: Computer-Based Automation in the Soviet Chemical Industry: Automated Sulfuric Acid Production
- A. Prutkovsky: Western Technology and Soviet Phosphorus Furnaces: Analysis, Design, Operation
- V. Feiman: Assimilating Foreign Technology: Problems and Processes
- N. Kogan: The Economics of New Technology: The Soviet Chemical Machine Building Industry
- Anonymous: Recent Developments in the Soviet Chlor-Alkali industry

This material of altogether 149 pages is then "summarized" by the editor on another 45 pages, an unnecessary page-inflating repetition.

This "debriefing" exercise with five Soviet emigrants does not live up to the promise of the book's title, i.e. to describe the pace and mechanism of innovation in the Soviet chemical industry in contrast to the corresponding Western innovation. In fact, in their hit-and-run assault on the capitalist book market the authors present a hotch-potch of hastily sketched anecdotal lore viewed from the shop floor, irrelevant textbook matter concerning the basic chemistry and physics of the industrial processes in question, and commonplaces about the desirability of innovation, the self-imposed restraints of the Soviet political system, etc., mimeographed on single pages from a typescript prepared with CNSS (complete neglect of subscripts and superscripts) and skimpily bound. No coherent picture of the Soviet decision making process emerges, no truly comparative cost-benefit analyses are presented, the special status of the Soviet military supply system remains unexplored, etc.

To sum it up, this book is too naive and incomplete for the expert reader and too messy and inconsistent for the layman. In these times of strained library budgets *Innovation in the Soviet Chemical Industry* is one acquisition that can be skipped in good conscience.

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