In *Red Gas*, Per Högselius provides a historical review of the build-out of Soviet gas export infrastructure and the negotiations over accompanying contracts between Moscow and its first capitalist clients during the 1960s and 1970s. It seeks to explain the puzzle of contemporary European reliance on Russian gas, putting in context the disputes over transit and pricing in today's market environment with the first in-depth investigation.

The book takes a Large Technical Systems approach to the issue, and combines significant archival research with press coverage from the time. Considerable attention is given to the decision-making processes within the Soviet planning structure, and also by German and Austrian stakeholders eager to secure new supplies of gas.

The text is written chronologically, running briefly through the development of Soviet resources in the post-World War II era before settling in the 1960s when the process of system building gathered pace. It continues through the 1970s and 1980s as the list of capitalist buyers of Red Gas grew, and US opposition intensified. Here, Högselius spends a great deal of time discussing the process of decision making and contract formation as first Austria, then Germany and others signed up to receive Red Gas. Internal feuding between stakeholders within capitalist consumers of gas helped steer policymakers to Soviet supplies the author finds. By the 1990s, the narrative begins to thin as priority is given to how existing business relationships were transferred from Soviet to Russian management under Gazprom and concerns over reliability of supply as the Ukraine dispute loomed in the 2000s.

The great strength of *Red Gas* is the depth of empirical research conducted at state archives in Germany, Austria, Ukraine and Russia. Through this, Högselius manages to build a compelling narrative of the internal wrangling over whether, when and how much Soviet gas should be imported by various government, regional and company actors. The author also paints portraits of the key Soviet 'system-builders' whose task it was to propose, plan and coordinate the construction of a vast transnational pipeline network that would link production in remote parts of Russia and the Central Asian Republics with consumption centres in capitalist Europe. *Red Gas* is peppered with details from the archive, such as the 600,000 tons of pipeline that were laid for the Czechoslovak transit system alone – making it the biggest project in the country's 1971-1975 five-year plan – and the 200 km Nazi-built pipeline to the Polish industrial town of Stalowa Wola that made Soviet Ukraine a 'born exporter' post-war.
The text also lays bare the early failures of the Soviet gas system. Ukraine's position as a victim of gas politics goes far back, Högselius illustrates, as Soviet planners opted to prioritise early exports from Galician fields to the west over local demand during consecutive winters. This served to leave households and factories in the east without heating. Of great interest too are the details provided from early contract talks, usually a secretive aspect of the gas trade. Here Högselius explains the creation of an early pricing dynamic and the terms of business that have become standard in today's European gas market. The choice of the Stockholm arbitration court as the venue of final judgement in any dispute is highlighted, as is the system of price formation that blended elements of existing Dutch principles with a new kind of commodity valuation method that would ensure the producer covered its costs. The book also focuses on gas as a key aspect of West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik policy, and how the 'pipes-for-gas' deals of the early 1970s built-in interdependence between supplier and consumer. The trade in gas became one of the key pillars in the easing of tensions between West Berlin and the communist east.

But although Red Gas provides a great deal of detail on the decision making process in the Soviet Union, West Germany and Austria, it provides little of the view from states in-between. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are passive actors subjugated within the Soviet control economy but they each acted as key contributors to the system building process. It would, for example, add to the narrative had the text included the interests of Warsaw or Budapest when the decision was taken to route the 'Brotherhood' transit pipeline through Czechoslovakia as the key export route.

Agreement within CMEA countries to provide equipment and labour for major gas pipeline projects linking Russia with continental Europe in the 1970s and 1980s are touched upon, without outlining the scale of contribution from the red empire's satellite states to the process of system building and what they would be guaranteed in return. Nevertheless, the text is of great interest to academic and policymaking audiences alike. Others have sought to explain the Ukrainian transit issue, and looked at Soviet integration into the European market area. Red Gas is unique in its English language representation of both sides of the trade. For those interested in energy security, it sits alongside Daniel Yergin's work The Prize as a perfect companion piece focusing on the gas trade in Europe. For more economics-focused readers that follow the work of Jonathan Stern, the details on contract formation provide new details on the genesis of the European gas market.

Högselius's broader argument that the "energy weapon" thesis is a misunderstood concept referring all too often only to intentional disruption to physical supply is also timely. Instead, the author argues it must be understood as a broader dynamic effect that can for example be used to promote prestige for the supplier – as was the case when Soviet gas first flowed across the Iron Curtain to Austria just days after Warsaw Pact tanks had rolled into Prague in 1968.

Further secondary economic impacts of gas supplies into new markets should also be recognised as part of the "energy weapon" thesis it is argued, which is often more perception that objective reality. With the Russia – Ukraine gas conflict showing little sign of imminent resolution in autumn 2015, points such as these are as relevant to consumers today as they were when countries first considered bridging the ideological divide with gas in the 1960s. Pipeline developments such as the Nord Stream line opened in 2011 to connect Russia directly with Germany under the Baltic Sea, and controversies over Gazprom plans for a sister project which would
allow a similar transit diversion around Europe's southern periphery, show that the process of system building is far from finished. Högselius shows that what we may understand as the post-Soviet phenomena of energy politics and the "energy weapon" are in fact the latest chapters in long-running debates over reliance on external energy suppliers. These processes are far from being definitively resolved.

In conclusion, *Red Gas* provides a valuable contextual resource for those working on European energy politics and can be considered a must-read for anyone dealing specifically with gas, or Russia's historical economic relationship with Germany and Austria. It is structured to cover the process of system building as a flowing narrative through the decades of development, bringing in both state-level actors and the personalities within the communist structures of command and capitalist corporate actors. Here, the leadership of the West German federal region of Bavaria is as pivotal to attracting Soviet gas as West Berlin or the major importer Ruhrgas. It is the details of how these disparate actors operated in concert that makes *Red Gas* such a success.

>>

Zitierweise:

https://www.pol-int.org/de/publikationen/red-gas-russia-and-origins-european-energy-dependence?j5Q6rewycZ5HtUDXTWpx7UZE=1&r=3557