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Social Science Research on Mitigation of and Recovery from Disaster and Large Scale Hazards. Edited by Boris Porfiriev and E. L. Quarantelli. Newark, DE: Disaster Research Center, 1996. \$25.00 (U.S.)

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The challenges of reviewing this "book" are many. First, it is an edited volume containing fourteen articles from Russia. Equally allocated, this would allow about 30 words per article in this review, or put another way, I could report titles and perhaps a qualitative rating system (e.g., "two thumbs up," or "boo berries to this one"). Second, the book is actually a monograph in the Disaster Research Center series, which serves as a repository for most of what we know about disasters and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Third, the translation leaves readers to struggle through the language barrier on their own throughout most of the volume. Fourth, authors as a group must both be pedantic and illuminating, a tough challenge to be sure, especially in a foreign language that uses a different alphabet. Fifth, the authors as a group read like the who's who in Russian science volume one, making it clear that the presumption of quality is assured. And finally, one of the editors is one of the foremost scholars of disaster research in the world, which challenges the reviewer to recognize the value that the editors found in the project.

The first section of the book deals with the development of sociological study of disasters in Russia. The first two of these papers summarize the state of social science research in general and as it relates to disaster. The other examines the response to the Armenian earthquake in 1988. The section shows remarkable similarities with the Western development of the field, contrasted with the unique setting of a social structure once mandated by government. The second section

deals with the relationship of development to disasters. These two papers broach the idea that the sociology of organizations and behavior are at the root of a sustainable future. The third section applies a systems approach for disaster response to large-scale technological disasters. And like the Western counterparts in history, these papers seem content to describe these situations and conclude as to the magnitude of these disasters. The fourth section of the volume addresses research on social, psychological, and medical effects. The first two papers in this section address the psychological, social, and medical impacts of the Chernobyl nuclear accident and the nuclear testing program in the Altai region in southern Siberia. The third addresses the process of medical and ecological risk analysis associated with the destruction of weapons of mass destruction. The final section addresses the social, organizational, and legal responses of Russian communities and authorities. The final three papers address the current situation of disaster response in Russia in terms of current regulations, field studies in communities impacted by Chernobyl, and disaster response to the May 1995 earthquakes resulting in approximately 2,000 deaths in Neftegorsk. These "case studies" reflect the state of the art in disaster response in Russia as it exists today (between 1990 and 1995).

While because of the language barrier and translation this is one of the hardest volumes to read, there are several nuggets of information that are worth the read. First, there is a remarkable similarity in the development of emergency response that indicates that an extremely stable set of "laws" governing how these systems work may exist. Second, the assent from a government dictated social science to a scientific field that is functioning and learning requires the respect of all that have not gone through it. And finally, the volume underscores the need for the whole field, both East and West, to move beyond description to empirical generalizations, theory, and the accumulation of knowledge in the form of principles, theses, and propositions. If you are looking for a comparable book to the recent hazard reassessment volume, skip this one. If you are looking for a remarkable stability in what the west knows about hazards and how it also works in non-Western environs, this is a tough-to-read winner.