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Anna Mazanik
Sanitizing Moscow: Waste, Animals, and Urban Health in Late Imperial Russia
University of Pittsburgh Press, 2025
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In the book under review, Anna Mazanik offers a new perspective on the history of Moscow, then the second city of the Russian Empire, from the 1870s to the revolutionary year of 1917. Based on detailed research, she brings together insights from environmental, urban and animal history, and the history of medicine, public health, and children. She explains how, why and with what results the municipal authorities and a range of professionals endeavoured to transform their polluted, dirty, unhealthy, and rapidly expanding metropolis into a 'clean', 'modern', 'European' and 'sanitary' city. On the way, we learn about the significance of the 'bacteriological revolution', recognising germs rather than miasmas as causing disease; the role of sanitary and health professionals in the city's government; how the city's elites saw their city in a Europe and wider world that were changing rapidly. We also learn how the city functioned on a day-to-day level, how it governed itself, how it housed and fed its inhabitants, tried to keep them clean and healthy, and in some cases, educated and cared for their children.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part 'A Quest of Clean Modernity' sets the scene. The author explains what the city's elites cared about and why they embarked on their quest in the 1870s. She argues that they were motivated not by a catastrophic epidemic or crisis, but a desire for European modernity. Part two discusses 'Water, Waste, and Technologies of Sanitation', focusing on the construction of a sewage system for some of the city's human and industrial waste. Mazanik explains why the Moscow sewage system was based on that of Memphis Tennessee, a much smaller American city, rather than one of its European counterparts. She also explains why, despite germ theory, Moscow chose as its model a system devised to deal with 'miasmas'. Part three turns our attention to the slaughter of livestock to provide meat for Moscow. In the 1880s, at a time of the medicalisation of veterinary science and deeper understandings of the spread of diseases, the city authorities built a municipal abattoir to supplant smaller, insanitary slaughterhouses. Incidentally, we learn about the cowboys who drove herds of cattle thousands of kilometres from the Eurasian steppes to Moscow, latterly via railheads.

Part four takes us from livestock to children. Moscow's infant and childhood mortality were horrific. As late as 1912, out of every 100 live births in the city, 27.7 died, more than in other cities and villages in the empire and elsewhere in Europe. Infant mortality in Moscow was nearly twice that of Berlin and three times that of Paris. Physicians and public health specialists could identify the causes but lacked the means to deal with them. Some attempts were made to use primary schools to improve child health, but not all children attended schools. Following the relative success of the sewage system and abattoir, the failure to address infant and childhood mortality leaves the reader with the sense that the city's leaders and professionals had fallen far short of their aspirations. This is not a judgement on Mazanik's fine book. She makes clear that the santisation of Moscow was a long-term project, and one that was still underway when Russia became involved in World War One and then collapsed into revolution and civil war. The Soviet government which emerged then built on the work of its predecessors. At the end of the book, the author draws on her own experiences as a child in the city in the 1990s to suggest that some of the innovations she analyses in her book persisted into the post-Soviet period.

Mazanik's book suggests ideas for further work. Together with Charlotte Henze's book, *Disease, Health Care and Government in Late Imperial Russia Life and Death on the Volga, 1823–1914* (Routledge, 2011), this book on Moscow could serve as a starting point to investigate wider moves to sanitise the Russian Empire. As Mazanik hints, comparisons between Orthodox Christian and Muslim regions, moreover, would be illuminating. Mazanik's book focuses on the elites but indicates the importance of investigating the perspectives of the mass of the city's population, particularly recently arrived migrants from the villages. Throughout the book, Mazanik locates Moscow and its endeavours to become a sanitary city in the context of similar developments in other cities around the world. She does so, moreover, in an engaging manner that makes her book a pleasure to read. Thus, this book on Moscow merits the attention of environmental, urban and public health historians specialising on other cities in other parts of world.

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