



Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters

By Brown, Kate

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Summary: While many transnational histories of the nuclear arms race have been written, Kate Brown provides the first definitive account of the great plutonium disasters of the United States and the Soviet Union. In Plutopia, Brown draws on official records and dozens of interviews to tell the extraordinary stories of Richland, Washington and Ozersk, Russia—the first two cities in the world to produce plutonium. To contain secrets, American and Soviet leaders created plutopias—communities of nuclear families living in highly-subsidized, limited-access atomic cities. Fully employed and medically monitored, the residents of Richland and Ozersk enjoyed all the pleasures of consumer society, while nearby, migrants, prisoners, and soldiers were banned from plutopia—they lived in temporary "staging grounds" and often performed the most dangerous work at the plant. Brown shows that the plants' segregation of permanent and temporary workers and of nuclear and non-nuclear zones created a bubble of immunity, where dumps and accidents were glossed over and plant managers freely embezzled and polluted. In four decades, the Hanford plant near Richland and the Maiak plant near Ozersk each issued at least 200 million curies of...

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