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When have you gone into an electronics store, picked up a desirable gadget, and found that it was labeled "Made in Russia"? Probably never. Russia, despite its epic intellectual achievements in music, literature, art, and pure science, is a negligible presence in world technology. Despite its current leaders' ambitions to create a knowledge economy, Russia is economically dependent on gas and oil. In *Lonely Ideas*, Loren Graham investigates Russia's long history of technological invention followed by failure to commercialize and implement.

For three centuries, Graham shows, Russia has been adept at developing technical ideas but abysmal at benefiting from them. From the seventeenth-century arms industry through twentieth-century Nobel-awarded work in lasers, Russia has failed to sustain its technological inventiveness. Graham identifies a range of conditions that nurture technological innovation: a society that values inventiveness and practicality; an economic system that provides investment opportunities; a legal system that protects intellectual property; a political system that encourages innovation and success. Graham finds Russia lacking on all counts. He explains that Russia's failure to sustain technology, and its recurrent attempts to force modernization, reflect its political and social evolution and even its resistance to democratic principles.

But Graham points to new connections between Western companies and Russian researchers, new research institutions, a national focus on nanotechnology, and the establishment of Skolkovo, "a new technology city." Today, he argues, Russia has the best chance in its history to break its pattern of technological failure.

About the Author

Loren Graham, often described as the leading scholar on Russian science and technology outside that country, is the author of *The Ghost of the Executed Engineer* and other books. He is Professor Emeritus of the History of Science at MIT and Research Scholar at the Davis Center for Russia and Eurasian Studies at Harvard.

Reviews

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“succinct and devastating... It should be required reading in the Kremlin.” Joshua Lustig,
CURRENT HISTORY

“This short, engaging book will please not only historians of science and technology, who know Graham’s work well, but anyone interested in the social and economic conditions favorable to cultivating new, globally competitive industries.” The Chronicle of Higher Education

Endorsements

“An outstanding contribution to the economics of technical progress and to the understanding of Russian history from Peter the Great to Putin. It explains why Russian modernization efforts have repeatedly failed, whereas Silicon Valley has flourished, and what would need to be done to make the modernization of the Russian economy a reality.”

Michael Ellman, Emeritus Professor Amsterdam University

“Lonely Ideas seeks to explain why Russia and the Soviet Union failed to capitalize on a rich talent pool to become a leading scientific and technical power. Graham’s scholarship is excellent; others have written about the subjects covered in this book but no one has provided the sweeping synthetic vision shown by this author. No other English-language writer has the breadth and depth of knowledge, experience, and insight demonstrated in this book.”

Rochelle G. Ruthchild, Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University

“Lonely Ideas provides a social and institutional explanation for Russia’s long history of failed technologies. It asks whether it is ultimately possible for Russia to reform itself sufficiently to become an international player in technological innovation. It is pithy, provocative, and packed with fascinating material on Russia’s technological history. It will appeal to both a general and an academic readership.”

Christopher Otter, Department of History, Ohio State University