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From Canongate Books Ltd (February 23,1999) : Open Lands: Travels Through Russia's Once Forbidden Places by Mark Taplin (February 23,1999) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Open Lands: Travels Through Russia's Once Forbidden Places by Mark Taplin (February 23,1999):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Well-done indeed.By A CustomerAs an American who has lived in Russia at various times over 4 decades, over 40 years, both under Communism and in the decade since the fall of the Communist regime, I can say "Open Lands" really resonates. The author has done an excellent job of conveying the feel of the place - the look, climate, atmosphere. Beyond that, he's done a very good job indeed weaving the larger political and historical context into the work, so that places are set in time and space. Beautifully written, sensitive, accurate, telling account with great eye for detail. Fascinating, and worth buying.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy michael mcguiregood book8 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Open Lands, Closed Mind?By R. V. ProoyenThis is basically a time-warp report which punishes Russia about past tragedies, human suffering, and sly politics; written with a sort of morose satisfaction. It's not about the Russian spirit successfully striving to leapfrog from the 19th century Russian culture into the 21st century global culture. Readers will either rub their hands with glee at the sullen, false representation of Russia's lost century as still extant, or they will admire the spirit, creativity and willpower of a people strong enough to bounce from a 3rd world country to a

fledgling 1st world country...in just ten years!For the savvy reader, the book does provide a remarkable opportunity to read between the lines and compare new news with old history. The trap for the unwary reader is to take the author's second-hand descriptions of old Russian tragedies and past injustices as a blanket picture of present day. He lovingly describes the infrastructure conditions left over from an oppressive era; cracked buildings, ex gulag-prisoners' memories, hidden mass graves, cold trains, sheep's-head dinners, 1940-truck repairs, out-dated clothing, smuggling, mud, vodka, no bitumen, and so on.All seems hopeless and the read can be a bit of a downer unless one slaps himself awake to realize that Russia is not starting from the bottom. It's not an apathetic, fly-blown, poverty stricken bog that can't feed itself. In reality, there is no-one starving, the trains are clean and do run on time. They have industry, science, medicine, atomic energy, universities, space travel, literature, art, agriculture, creative spirit, smiles and hope.Otto von Bismark, the Prussian chancellor, once commented, "The Russians may take a long time to saddle their horses, but when they ride, they ride!"I give the book three stars for reporting, with seeming relish, only the unsavory.There's an opportunity for the author to redeem his objectivity and do the trip again in present time for Volume Two. It would make a very interesting read. Except next time, interview the people who are remaking the country; shave, bathe and leave the back-pack at home.