



One Of The World's Most Polluted Places

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The ever growing economies of China and India are seen as the biggest threats to the global environment in the coming years, but it is Russia where some of the most polluted places on earth are to be found, writes Sky News reporter David Bowden.



Too afraid to drink the water

According to a recent environmental report four of the top 10 dirtiest cities in the world are in the former Soviet Union, three of them are within the borders of Russia itself.

Dzerzhinsk is an overnight train ride away from Moscow, yet it might as well be another world.

The city is dominated by giant chemical factories, some working, others derelict, all contributing to Dzerzhinsk's environmental legacy.

This was home to Soviet Russia's chemical weapons industry - sarin, VX, mustard gases and dioxins were all produced in the city's factories.

That's all gone now, but chemicals are still the life blood of this place - according to a report by the Blacksmith Institute some toxins are 17 million times the safe limits!

Less than mile from one of the outlying viillages is an area the locals call the White Sea, yet no fish live in it, no boats sail on it and no one swims in it.

It's not really a sea at all, instead it's a huge man-made lake of toxic chemical waste in which nothing survives? Walking around it you can feel the fumes clawing at the back of your throat?

In the village itself we spoke to locals who are afraid to drink the water, because they say it's awash with chemical residues.

At the local cemetery headstone after headstone records a life ended prematurely.

The villagers talk of streets where neighbour after neighbour is ill many with cancer, they blame the chemical factories.

The authorities do not try to hide the impact of the industry that employs most of the city's population in one way or another, in fact we toured the imaginatively named " Centre for Professional Diseases".

Its director told us: "People who are left without work can't afford to be picky and our city gives them a great opportunity to earn a living" and that is the brutal truth for many who live and work in Dzerzhinsky.

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