

THE RUSSIAN ANNEXATION OF BESSARABIA: 1774–1828. A STUDY OF IMPERIAL EXPANSION. By *George F. Jewsbury*. East European Monographs, 15. Boulder, Colo.: *East European Quarterly*, 1976. vi, 199 pp. \$12.00. Distributed by Columbia University Press, New York.

Its quite inclusive title notwithstanding, this is not a study of the Oriental question and the military campaigns and diplomatic negotiations which resulted in Russia's annexation of the eastern half of the Principality of Moldavia. Rather, the book deals with Russian administrative policies within the new oblast of Bessarabia and the successively attempted solutions to the problem of integrating the province into the structure of the empire upon its annexation in 1812 (seven out of the nine chapters treat the 1812–28 period).

A beneficiary of Tsar Alexander I's federalist experiments, the oblast enjoyed a substantial degree of political and governmental autonomy after 1812. The tsar's government, overruling the advice of its local representatives, particularly the military ones, decided to retain the local institutions, legislation, and privileges, and to carry out the administration through the local boyar class under the supervision of imperial officials. This system of decentralized imperial rule was codified in the 1818 Statute of the province, which incorporated the basic Moldavian administrative, social, tax, and judicial structures, along with the power and privileges of the local boyars, and recognized Rumanian as the primary official language.

Despite the introduction of the Statute, Bessarabian autonomy rapidly became "a dead letter," as the author rightly points out (pp. 119–20). Imbued with attitudes of cultural superiority, and seeing themselves as representing a westernizing influence in a backward province, the Russian officials in Kishinev found the Moldavian boyars utterly unprepared to run the administrative and judiciary system. The officials worked zealously to curtail the boyars' attributions and power, as well as to reduce their numbers by invalidating many nobiliary titles. At the same time, a number of ambitious and opportunistic *parvenus* replaced old boyars in most positions of influence, beginning with the Oblast Council. Moreover, the Statute failed to preserve the province's politico-territorial integrity and population structure, which were seriously affected by Russian colonization and land grant policies in this period.

The official demise of the concept of imperial rule in Bessarabia embodied in the 1818 Statute began with the appointment of M. S. Vorontsov, as governor of New Russia and Bessarabia in 1823. Vorontsov proceeded to systematically substitute Russian institutions, laws, and personnel for Moldavian ones; his measures were continued by his successor in 1826, Count F. P. Pahlen. Bessarabian autonomy was formally ended in 1828 by an ukaz of Nicholas I, which revoked the 1818 Statute and extended to Bessarabia most rules and regulations in force in the Russian internal guberniias. The author concludes by assessing this resort to a centralist solution as indicative of the failure to successfully integrate the province into the empire.

Although based on published source material, the book represents a welcome contribution to the extremely scarce English-language literature on the subject.

VLADIMIR SOCOR  
*Columbia University*

M. S. LUNIN: CATHOLIC DECEMBRIST. By *Glynn Barratt*. Slavistic Printings and Reprintings, 272. The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1976. xii, 137 pp. 42 Dglds. \$16.40, paper.

Barratt's purpose is to provide readers limited to the English language with an introduction to one of the more interesting and complex figures among the Decembrist rebels. The effort leaves something to be desired. At the very beginning the author

plunges into a discussion of Lunin's political ideas and conversion to Catholicism without sketching in sufficient historical detail to make them comprehensible. Terms like "Liberal" and "legality" are frequently employed with no effort to give them workable definitions. To define liberal as democratic and Liberals as those favoring democratic reform is simply to replace one abstraction with another. One also encounters unsubstantiated concepts and categories such as prototypical peasant kulaks and "a general discontent among the gentry." On the other hand, rich documentation is provided for numerous minor points of Lunin's biography. The author even bolsters his text with some archival citations, but these do little more than confirm that the most important material touching on Lunin's career is already available in published form.

In view of the title one would expect to learn a great deal about Lunin's Catholicism and its relationship to his oppositional activity. Indeed, the author treats Lunin's conversion in detail and with considerable insight; yet, except for references to Lunin's eccentric religious practices while in exile, the author fails to establish a link between the revolutionary's religious views and political stance. This lack is, to some extent, compensated for by the inclusion in the appendix of a commentary by P. N. Svistunov that resolves this issue with greater clarity than does the rest of the book.

DAVID L. RANSEL

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

THE END OF SERFDOM: NOBILITY AND BUREAUCRACY IN RUSSIA, 1855–1861. By *Daniel Field*. Russian Research Center Studies, 75. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1976. xvi, 472 pp. \$17.50.

"Prereform Russia," Professor Field maintains, "was an anomaly—a society where the fundamental institution [that is, serfdom] enjoyed almost no sanction apart from the patronage of the state" (p. 360). He argues this point persuasively throughout a narrative of nearly four hundred pages.

Field views the emancipation debates among educated society, the nobility, the higher bureaucracy, and the Imperial Court as the end of an important era in Russia's history. As a result, he studiously avoids the temptation to view the political situation in Russia between 1855 and 1861 from the vantage point of later events. Rather, he constructs his narrative in a way which takes the reader step by step, with each step meticulously reconstructed, through the emancipation debates as they evolved during the first half-decade of Alexander II's reign.

Field clearly shows that the structure of the Russian autocracy, as it had evolved by the end of the reign of Nicholas I, had a critical impact upon the emancipation debates. To be sure, the autocrat himself was unassertive and far from resolute, but, Field insists, "serfdom was so dependent upon political agencies that when the state diffidently proposed to withdraw its support, serfdom had little or no momentum to carry on" (p. 359). As Field puts it, "serfdom had only a single survival mechanism, which was enmeshed in autocracy. The tsar's counsellors would periodically report that the abolition of serfdom was untimely on prudential grounds, the autocrat would defer to the counsel of prudence, and serfdom would receive a new lease on life" (p. 96). Thus, the critical factor in setting the emancipation process in motion was not so much what Alexander II did, as what he did not do. Field states the case clearly: "the autocrat had only once to refuse to play out his part, to deny the customary relieve, and serfdom was condemned" (p. 96).

Yet, how was it that the nobility, supposedly the most articulate and powerful group in Russia, proved so passive and ineffective when faced by the impending destruction of the institution upon which its economic and social existence was based?