

meaning from various historical data. The book is also a valuable tool for the teaching historian, as it provides the necessary background for the actual use of computers in history.

Tidewater Community College & Saint Leo College

John R. Moore

**Peter Waldron.** *The End of Imperial Russia, 1855-1917*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Pp. viii, 189. Cloth, \$49.95; ISBN 0-312-16536-6. Paper, \$18.95; ISBN 0-312-16537-4.

*The End of Imperial Russia, 1855-1917*, which is part of St. Martin's European History in Perspective series, analyzes the decades leading to the Bolshevik revolution in 1917. Peter Waldron focuses his attention on one of the most important and controversial eras in Russian history. Most historians of Russia agree that the changes and turmoil of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries set the stage for the events of 1917 and afterwards. In this work, Waldron divides his era into five major themes.

First, the Russian autocracy, often seen as one and the same with the state in Imperial Russia, initiates reform and counterreform. The author clearly shows that the nobility was not united, especially during the reign of Nicholas II (1894-1917). Some of the nobility supported reform, while others vehemently opposed it. Waldron emphasizes the reign of Nicholas II, while leaving the reform efforts of Alexander II (1855-1881) and the counterreform initiatives of Alexander III (1881-1894) relatively unexplored. A fuller explanation of the Great Reform era (1860s) and the Counterreform era (1880s) would have provided the reader with a better understanding when analyzing the end of the Romanov monarchy.

The second theme is that of the economic sector, both agricultural and industrial. This is a well-balanced chapter that provides a vivid picture of the economic realities facing peasant and working class Russia at the end of the century. Waldron dedicates much time to explaining the redemption payments that newly-freed serfs were required to pay, which resulted in many of them not truly being economically free.

Waldron's third theme addresses the social changes taking place in the last decades of Imperial Russia. He briefly discusses the changing role of women, the rural to urban shift, changes in the commune structure, the fading importance of the nobility, and the explosion in art, music, and literature. The Silver Age of Russian culture, especially literature, reflected many of the social changes taking place in Russia. Waldron emphasizes the works of Fedor Dostoevskii, Leo Tolstoi, and Anton Chekhov as a few examples of the artists who illuminated the changing world in front of them. It is unfortunate that the author compiles such a broad range of social topics into one brief section.



Empire and the end of the old order in Russia are the last two themes in this work. Russia's imperial borders were expanded from the era of Peter the Great (if not earlier) to the middle of the nineteenth century. However, it was evident by the beginning of the twentieth century that Russia's imperial status was fading. Russia experienced three military defeats (Crimean War 1854-56, Russo-Japanese War 1904-05, and World War I 1914-1918) in this era, which contributed mightily to the political, social, and military collapse of the empire, according to Waldron. The last chapter focuses most of its attention on the collapse during World War I. Unfortunately, Waldron does not give much attention to the rising radical/revolutionary movement that was active during this period and played a role in the fall of the Romanovs.

Aside from the problems already noted, there are two other drawbacks to this work. First, it is a thematic approach that might prove difficult for undergraduates. There are three distinct eras (Alexander II, Alexander III, and Nicholas II) covered in this text, and they differ greatly. Waldron discusses his various themes across the different eras that someone with some knowledge of Russian history might find interesting; however, most undergraduates would probably be confused. The second problem is there are no maps. Since Russia has had several military conflicts, boundary changes, and internal movements, it seems necessary to include at least one general map, if not more specific ones.

Overall, the work is very readable, well-researched (archival, primary, and secondary sources), and provides an excellent bibliography that includes books and articles. The articles are a nice addition to the bibliography. This work would be very good for advanced undergraduates and instructors refreshing themselves, but for beginners in Russian history the thematic approach might prove difficult.

College of DuPage

William B. Whisenhunt

**William J. Tompson.** *Khrushchev: A Political Life.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Pp. ix, 341. Paper, \$15.95; ISBN 0-312-16360-6.

**Mark Galeotti.** *Gorbachev and His Revolution.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Pp. ix, 142. Cloth, \$49.95; ISBN 0-312-16481-5. Paper, \$18.95; ISBN 0-312-16482-3.

In retrospect, the last fifty years of the Soviet Union's existence constitute a case study in the decline and fall of empire. The legacy of Stalin's systematic terror, the burdens of world war, economic and industrial decline, technological backwardness, a single-party regime that stifled innovation, and the burdens of maintaining a military-industrial system capable of propping up multinational empire seem insurmountable obstacles to reforming the unreformable. These two books join the flood of works