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Book Review: Reforming the Tsar's Army: Military Innovation in Imperial Russia from Peter the Great to the Revolution

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1920–4, and he also relies heavily on the contemporaneous biography published by Louis Abelly in 1664. He makes full use of Coste's major biography, published in 1934, but he ignores Anglo-Saxon work, such as Rapley's *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France*. Pujo is certainly faithful to the documentary record, though his evident sympathy for the saint means that he is not always inclined to be critical of the sources. For example, we know that de Paul was reticent about the details of his early life and undoubtedly exaggerated the poverty of his upbringing. Where there are gaps in the historical record, Pujo perhaps tends to assume too much. Thus, he assumes that de Paul's meetings with Pierre de Bérulle were crucial to his personal formation, which may well be true, but we cannot be sure. And his account of de Paul's first meeting with François de Sales assumes that the two men exchanged a glance 'so full of magnetism' that de Paul stood out from the crowd and the two men recognized in each other a kindred spirit. Yet, if Pujo's sympathy for his subject means that the biography recounts the story of the saint's life in rather traditional fashion and lacks any surprises, it is nevertheless well-informed and readable. First issued in French in 1998, this English translation is to be welcomed.

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David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye and Bruce W. Menning, eds, *Reforming the Tsar's Army: Military Innovation in Imperial Russia from Peter the Great to the Revolution*, Cambridge University Press and the Woodrow Wilson Center Press: Cambridge, 2004; 374 pp.; 0521819881; £40/ \$65.00 (hbk); DOI: 10.1177/0265691407071832

This is an unusually coherent and well-edited collection of essays, which stays close to its stated theme: the dynamics of military reform in the Russian Empire. The 15 contributions are grouped by four major themes: (1) population, resources and war; (2) intelligence and knowledge; (3) responses to specific wars and (4) personalities. In addition, there is a useful section of commentaries by three 'outsiders', who analyse the essays in the light of the historiography on imperial Russia, European military history and the present concerns of the Russian military. The result is a surprisingly comprehensive look at the sources of military change over the course of two centuries, with an especially strong focus on the period between the Crimean War and the First World War.

Part one includes essays by Robert Baumann on the conception and implementation of universal service reform in the 1870s and 1880s, by Mark von Hagen on the army's approach to nationalism in the post-reform era, by David Jones on the Boy Scouts in the last years of the empire, and by Jacob Kipp on strategic railway building between the Crimean War and the Russo–Turkish War of 1877–8. The basic theme addressed here is a familiar one: how an empire 'poor' in terms of material resources and social unity attempted to prepare for modern war against European states presumed to be much richer in both respects. At the risk of oversimplifying very complex and stimulating arguments, the overall conclusion of these four pieces is that military reformers were more innovative

and successful in attempting to deal with human resource constraints than with the economic and industrial aspects of modern war.

Part two deals with the often neglected topic of military intelligence, broadly conceived. David Schimmelpenninck gives a useful overview of the history of military intelligence operations over the whole course of imperial Russian history, while David Alan Rich summarizes the incisive arguments he made regarding the rise of positivism and professionalism in the officer corps in his 1998 book *The Tsar's Colonels*. The other two chapters likewise bring fresh air to the subject: E. Willis Brooks argues persuasively that Dmitrii Miliutin's creation of a military press enabled military politicians to deploy military intelligence as a means to influence state policy, and Gudrun Persson provides a detailed exploration of military attaches and their role in driving military reform in the 1860s.

Part three includes novel pieces by Frederick Kagan on military reform during the Napoleonic era, Dmitrii Oleinikov on the impact of the Caucasus campaigns, Bruce Menning on the shift to offensive strategies in the decade before the First World War, and John Steinberg on attempts at reform after 1905 in the General Staff Academy. Kagan argues that, although defeats early in the Napoleonic era spurred some aspects of military reform, the centralizing state reforms associated with the shift to a ministerial system in 1802 were just as important. Further, reform came as much from lessons learned in the victories of 1812 as from earlier defeats. Oleinikov shows, in parallel with Bruce Lincoln's work on the bureaucracy as a whole, that the reign of Nicholas I, far from being a period of 'stagnation', was in fact a period of laying the groundwork for the Great Reforms. In this case, though, it was specific combat experience – the conquest of the Caucasus – rather than reform-mindedness as such that provided the impetus for future reform projects. Menning, the dean of imperial Russian military history, provides an essay which deserves a very wide readership indeed. He takes on the unenviable task of arguing that the Russian shift to an offensive strategy prior to the Great War was rational, while still demonstrating why the Russian offensives of 1914 essentially failed. His argument is substantive: military intelligence suggested (correctly) that Russia would enjoy superior numbers against its foes even before mobilization had been fully completed; Russian manpower experts felt that offensive strategies would improve morale at a crucial moment; finally, the window of opportunity provided by their enemies' delaying their own engagement with Russia would allow Russia to establish a better strategic position at a relatively low cost. Thus, the failure of the offensives lay not so much in the theory, as with the high command's endemic failure to direct large masses of soldiers in the field and to coordinate the difficult task of extending a supply structure into newly occupied territories. Finally, Steinberg suggests why the army's top officers proved so unable to deal with the demands of modern war in his damning description of how proponents of 'counter-reform' hindered the sensible plans for changing not only the content, but also the methods of staff officer training in the years following the Russo–Japanese War.

Part four demonstrates the crucial role of individual military leaders throughout the imperial period. It begins with Paul Bushkovitch's detailed analysis of Peter the Great's

selection of top commanders, which shows that Peter, despite his reputation for assaulting the Russian elite, consistently offered key command posts not only to members of the most notable aristocratic families, but indeed even to his most outspoken opponents. Bushkovitch argues that this apparent paradox was in fact political genius, as he realized the potential power of his top servitors and co-opted them into his grand project rather than isolating them and allowing them 'to fish in troubled waters' (272). Menning, in his second article in the collection, returns to the question raised earlier by Oleinikov about the role of frontier warfare in Russian military change, and he provides much the same answer: both Catherine the Great's top general, G.A. Potemkin, and Nicholas I's war minister, A.I. Chernyshev, used their frontier experience as a framework for understanding Russia's military position and its future security needs. Finally, Oleg Airapetov shows why Dmitrii Miliutin, enamoured of the Prussian system in so many other respects, stubbornly opposed the formation of a General Staff. In essence, Miliutin, like so many Russian reformers before and since, proved unable to overcome the fact that fundamental institutional reform had to be started in a political system which relied on personal power to a much greater degree than other European states. As a result, he felt the need to protect his individual power, and thereby left a military system still too dependent on talented and devoted leadership at the top.

As David McDonald's commentary states, taken together these essays demonstrate in detail that not only were the 'histories of the autocracy and its military . . . inextricably bound up with one another', but also that 'the armed forces were a microcosm of the state and society they served and protected' (321). Dennis Showalter is also right to conclude that the contributions collectively destroy three cherished pan-European myths about the Russian military. Instead of a military that was alternately imitative and incompetent, saved only by 'General Winter', the Russian military was in fact: (1) autonomous, able to use outside foreign ideas and experiences without feeling the need to slavishly copy them, (2) rational, more inclined to systemic considerations of resource constraints and strategic necessity than long ruminations about the 'Russian soul' and (3) the 'imperial Russian army was competent' – the most 'shockingly revisionist of the conclusions'. In sum, the tsarist army was what it appeared to be at the time: 'a first-string player, a dangerous opponent, and an ally worth cultivating' (326–7).

This is a specialized volume, but it will appeal greatly to historians of other aspects of imperial Russia and to European military historians. As the former group look back with increasing interest to the impact of the frontier, the early nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, these essays should indeed prove valuable in showing how the state's largest institution dealt with the process of reform and historical change. The latter will also find much of use, not only in the essay by Menning described above, but also in the detailed studies of a somewhat different model of colonial warfare. In sum, this is a consistent and strong volume. The editors and authors deserve a great deal of credit for producing a multi-faceted yet coherent analysis of Russian military reform.

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