

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?

What had happened to the nobility which, in the eighteenth century, had extorted numerous political and economic concessions from the autocrat through so-called "palace revolutions," revolutions which, after all, had led to the assassinations of Alexander II's grandfather Paul I and his great-grandfather Peter III? Field answers these questions in a thought-provoking, but convincing, manner. As he points out, "the serfowning nobility . . . was the beneficiary of systematic government aid and subvention, which nobles happily accepted as their due. Neither they nor responsible officials suspected that this unstinting patronage would facilitate the abolition of serfdom as the experience of 1857–1861 suggests that it did. . . . The government, quite unwittingly, had stifled the nobility's collective energies, actual and potential, with largesse" (p. 38).

Part of this largesse, as Professor Arcadius Kahan pointed out some years ago, had come as a result of the state's efforts to further the "westernization" of Russia's nobles during the eighteenth century. It was in the events of 1857–61, according to Field, that "westernization of Russia's élite finally claimed its due" (p. 97). By the time of Alexander II's accession, all of the emperor's closest advisers had agreed, in principle, that emancipation was necessary. But, Field argues, this was "an abstract concept that at some happy future time would bring Russia into accord with the norms of civilized nations" (p. 97). Nevertheless, acceptance of this concept, abstract though it was in 1855, was of critical importance in achieving the abolition of serfdom in Russia. As Field demonstrates, once Alexander II refused to grant another customary reprieve to that institution, his advisers "had no ground for resistance because of their longstanding commitment [to emancipation] in principle" (p. 97).

Thus, Field argues that "nineteenth-century Russian serfdom lacked supporting ideological and political structures" (p. 100). The result was that "the nobility was inept, disorganized, and submissive in the crisis of 1857–1861 because of the habits that government patronage had instilled in it" (p. 40). Yet there were other reasons why the nobility failed to mount an attack against the government's program, which ultimately led to emancipation in 1861, and the main one becomes clear as Field's narrative unfolds. It was not until the very end of the debate, when discussion of the proposed Emancipation Acts reached the Imperial State Council, that "the tsar turned away from the sanovniki and at last openly committed himself to the emancipators' point of view" (p. 353). Only then did it become evident to Russia's nobles that emancipation, on the terms proposed by the Editorial Commission, would become a reality. Until that point, the empire's serfowners had hoped that the emperor would accede to their views about the form which the abolition of serfdom should take.

A brief review cannot do full justice to Field's argument and to the detail of his study about the nobility and bureaucracy in Russia. His is not a book that can be read casually, nor can its major points be extracted quickly. One must read the book as Field has written it, painstakingly and with serious attention to detail. But it is well worth the effort to follow Field's complex narrative through the tortuous paths of the emancipation debates of 1857–61. Those who do will be rewarded with what is the most thorough and detailed account yet written about the political processes which produced the emancipation of the Russian serfs on February 19, 1861.

W. BRUCE LINCOLN
Northern Illinois University