

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.

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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