

The Imperial Russian Army in Peace, War, and Revolution, 1856-1917. Roger R. Reese. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2019. xvii + 494 pp. \$50. Hardcover ISBN-13: 9780700628605.

Professor Roger R. Reese of Texas A&M University has published extensively on the history of the Red Army. In the current volume he addresses the history of the late Imperial Russian Army during the reigns of Alexander II (1856-1881), Alexander III (1881-1894) and Nicholas II (1894-1917) to its collapse during the revolutionary upheavals of World War One. As Reese suggests, Russia's defeat in the Crimean War set in motion a broad range of reforms that became known as the Great Reforms, commencing with the abolition of serfdom in 1861. The major reforms of the army followed under Dmitri Miliutin (1816-1912), whom Alexander II appointed as Deputy Minister of War in 1860 and in 1861 as Minister of War, a post he would hold until May 1881.

Reese sets out to make his case by analyzing the three major wars which Russia fought between 1856 and 1917: the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and Russia's World War I (1914-1917). His focus upon the Russo-Turkish War is quite logical, for it is the first test of Miliutin's reformed army based on mass conscription, mobilization, and significant utilization of rail movement into the theater of war. The author provides a brief but efficient account of the wars in the Balkans and the Caucasus and addresses the negative impact of "Granddukism" on strategic leadership where court and family ties justified the appointment of senior commanders of marginal abilities.

Drawing on the work of John A. Lynn II concerning the evolution of the French Army during the period 1789 to 1815, Reese seeks to apply two competing notions of the Imperial Russian Army's evolution from an institution based upon "an army honor" in which the officer corps' loyalty was to the autocrat and a competing notion that emerged as other strata of Russian society were brought into the officer corps and came to support a different vision of the institution as "an army of virtue" where loyalty shifted from the Tsar to the nation itself.

The problem with this model is that Imperial Russia was not Bourbon France. The reforms of Peter the Great in the early eighteenth-century associated with the creation of the Table of Ranks had fundamentally altered the structure of state service in the civil government, army, navy, and clergy. Service by nobles was obligatory under Peter the Great and until the reign of Tsar Peter III who made such service not obligatory. The hereditary nobility still dominated its officer corps. Officer advancement favored those born into the nobility, especially after the creation of the Guards Regiments as an elite fighting force in 1683. However, the Table of Ranks which Peter I introduced in 1722 did offer those of non-noble origins two distinct outcomes via promotion through the ranks: promotion to the rank of ensign carried with it the granting of personal nobility and promotion to the eighth rank awarded the person and his heirs the status of hereditary nobility. No such path existed for those who served as common soldiers, who served for twenty-five years

and were drawn from serfs, state peasants, and other pole-tax paying subjects of the Tsar. The Table of Ranks would survive until it was abolished by the Bolsheviks in December 1917.

The author examines in detail the evolving relations between officers and soldiers during the major wars that Russia fought in the post-Crimean period with special attention to the changing composition of the Russian officer corps from an institution of the nobility into one drawn from other strata of Russian society. He makes a compelling case for social conflict within the officer corps as a dominant feature of the institution throughout the entire post-Crimean period. Thus, the role of the World War One neither accelerated existing trends nor animated a final crisis, leading to the collapse of the old regime in 1917 and facilitating the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks and their abolition of the Imperial Russian Army in late 1917.

Few, if any, historians would question the long history of dysfunction before and after the Emancipation that characterized relations between Russian officers and Russian soldiers. While acknowledging continuities by fits and starts after 1861, the mainstream interpretation, associated with scholars like Allan Wildman and Mikhail Frenkin who wrote on the topic before the collapse of the Soviet Union, viewed the Great War as inducing systemic stresses and dislocations that amounted to something more than culmination of past trends. Reese suggests that this earlier interpretation drew uncritically upon the memoirs of White Officers who sought to overthrow the Bolshevik regime.

Reese's focus on the reformed army, however, led him to ignore two other wars that influenced Miliutin's ideas on reform at the beginning of the post-Crimean era. The first was the victorious conclusion of the Caucasus War of 1817-1864. Milutin himself had served in what was a frontier war against Muslim tribesmen in that theater between 1839-1845. The second conflict was the January Insurrection (1863-1864) which erupted in Congress Poland as draft riots and spread to Lithuania and Western Ukraine.

The author's treatment of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 as a ground campaign fought in Manchuria fundamentally distorts the character of that war by focusing exclusively on the ground war and ignores the naval war, which Japan won by destroying two Russian naval forces: the Pacific squadron deployed at Port Arthur and the Baltic Fleet sent to the Pacific to challenge Japan's naval superiority and defeated in the Battle of Tsushima Straits in late May 1905. Those naval disasters had two profound impacts on the Russian military and civil society. They set off popular revolts, which became the Revolution of 1905 and carried with them demands for major reforms in the Imperial government, leading to the creation of a government that included a constitutional order and an elected lower house of parliament, the State Duma. The author, in assessing officer-soldier relations during this period, sees certain positive trends in the relations between officers and soldiers. The second factor was the emergence of budgetary pressure upon the tsarist government after 1905 to fund the recreation of the Baltic Fleet and Pacific Squadron and the modernization of the Black Sea Fleet, which effectively reduced the amount of funds available for the modernization of the Imperial Russian Army after 1905.

Reese devotes his greatest attention to the role of the Imperial Russian Army in World War One. He critiques earlier studies of the Russian Imperial Army's performance during that war and

sees the major source of its poor performance as the long-term relations between officers and men. However, the military revolt in February 1917 began with the Petrograd garrison when Nicholas II ordered the garrison commander, General Sergei Semonovich Khalbalov (1858-1924), to fire on workers' demonstrations on February 26, 1917, and parts of the Petrograd Garrison joined the workers' revolt. Shortly thereafter the revolt exploded in the Navy with major events in both Petrograd and Helsinki, where naval barracks and major defense industries were co-located, and sailors took to questioning the right of their officers to exercise command without their approval. Reese makes no mention of this side of the breakdown of military order, which effectively put an end to the Imperial Russian Navy after it lost the battle to hold Moon Sund to the Kaiser's Navy in the fall of 1917.

Focused on the army, the author does not emphasize the other crises that developed inside the Tsar's government and Russian society during the war, including food shortages in the cities and the countryside, the instability of the civil administration, the consequences of the influence of Rasputin in court society, or the pernicious rumors about the Tsarina's German heritage which painted her as a German spy. Nicholas II did not grasp that these crises within the armed forces were inherently linked to the collapse of the legitimacy of the Romanov Dynasty within elements of the armed forces and among the civilian population.

Reese's work is an extensive treatment of the Russian Army during its last six decades. He places major emphasis on a new view of the final collapse of the army from long term causes including the changing composition of its officer corps and the inability of that officer corps to grasp the importance of a transition from "an army honor" to "an army of virtue." Reese sees John Lynn's image of the transformation of the French Army during the age of revolution and Napoleon as fitting Russia in 1914-1917. He does not focus on the new challenges that World War One put before the armed forces, the Imperial Government and civil society, which included higher casualty rates, depletion of the trained officer corps over its duration, and the technological backwardness of Russian forces in key areas of modern, industrial warfare.

Jacob W. Kipp, University of Kansas