

## **Robert J. Abbott. *Policemen of the Tsar: Local Police in an Age of Upheaval*.**

**Historical Studies in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, vol. 8. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2022. xvi, 216 pp. Appendix. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. Tables. \$65.00, hard bound.**

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For the better part of half a century, Robert J. Abbott has studied police and policing in imperial Russia. In this slim volume, he examines local policing in the second half of the nineteenth century, charting the regime's inconsistent and often ineffective efforts to reform its police forces throughout the Russian empire. Grounding his discussion in archival government documents and detailed statistics, and drawing on recent historical scholarship, Abbott argues that the tsarist regime's repeated failures to establish a reliable and permanent police force, despite a myriad of proposals and projects, prevented it from enforcing its priorities at the local level, both at home and in the imperial borderlands. Ultimately, he finds that, contrary to the notion of Russia as a well-ordered police state, the regime's inability to support the local police as an effective instrument of social control reveals the bankruptcy of the autocracy, particularly in meeting fundamental challenges to its authority.

Abbott situates police reform firmly within the context of the social restructuring stimulated by the serf emancipation and the Great Reforms of the 1860s, arguing that police reform was a key element necessary for the success of the emancipation, which could not be implemented without it. After discussing the position, role, and expectations of the local police before the Great Reforms, he explores various reform efforts, both proposed and implemented, and their impacts. Police reform efforts addressed a variety of issues: adjusting the duties of the police in light of the *zemstvo* and court reforms, funding police activities, revising hierarchies and organizational structures, altering accountability, improving investigations, and hiring effective personnel, among others. Describing the various proposals in detail, Abbott concludes that despite some creativity, innovation, and good intentions, police reform in the second half of the nineteenth century proceeded piecemeal, was shaped by personal whims and rivalries, and ultimately resulted in a backward, atomized, underfunded, and corrupt local police force that could not meet the needs and expectations of the regime. In his conclusions, Abbott presents the regime both as a victim and a victimizer; the poor performance of the local police undermined tsarist authority, but that poor performance was enabled by the regime's inability to implement effective police reforms.

*Policemen of the Tsar* attempts to cover the issue of local policing across the entire Russian empire. Abbott examines the local police in their rural, urban, and suburban contexts, focusing generally on European Russia and with considerable attention on St. Petersburg itself, but covering a diverse and variably controlled territory. In an Appendix, Abbott adds a short overview of policing in the imperial borderlands of the Baltics, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Congress Poland, and Siberia. Because each setting reveals its own particularities, the examples he uses sometimes seem like separate and unrelated case studies rather than constituent elements of the whole. This dynamic may actually reinforce the challenges Abbott identifies regarding the governance and control over Russian society as the authorities

attempted police reform across a large and diverse territory, but such connections get lost in the narrative that tends toward broader generalizations and vague assertions. Indeed, the sweeping coverage often obscures regional differences and the variable nature of local police forces, and leaves the overall arguments divorced from the evidence.

Nevertheless, *Policemen of the Tsar* makes an important contribution to a growing literature focusing on crime, policing, social control, and juridical reforms in imperial and early Soviet Russia. Overall, Abbott paints his arguments in broad strokes and, although he offers a compelling overview, the balance between the general and the particular is not always effective. His reliance on archival and statistical data, the compilation of which reflects his extended and deep engagement with the sources, suggests opportunities and possibilities for further research to tease out the local dynamics of police reform and highlight their impact. The volume will be of interest to scholars of crime, legal reform, and social control in the Russian empire.

## **Nicole Eaton. *German Blood, Slavic Soil: How Nazi Königsberg Became Soviet Kaliningrad.***

**Battlegrounds: Cornell Studies in Military History. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003. xiii, 315 pp. Notes. Index. Illustrations. Maps. \$39.95, hard bound.**

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This is a well and densely written book about the intriguing topic of how a German city changed hands and turned into a Soviet one in the course of a few years. It combines the local level of Nazism and Stalinism, providing many instances of comparison of both regimes. Another topic is the end phase of World War II and the immediate postwar years. The author focusses mainly on 1944–48 but also offers insights into earlier and later periods. The meticulously researched narrative is grounded in a vast amount of literature in English, Russian, and German, as well as sources from German, Polish, and Russian archives. Especially interesting is the use of memoirs by former German and Soviet inhabitants of Königsberg/Kaliningrad. These memories are treated with the necessary amount of criticism. Contemporary guidebooks cited by the author offer the reader a view onto the city before destruction. Many larger towns changed hands after the redrawing of postwar borders but this was a special case. Nicole Eaton analyzes the finest details and presents highly differentiated arguments. The monograph consists of an introduction, seven mostly chronologically organized chapters, and a conclusion.

A minor critique concerns some inaccuracies in the text. According to Eaton, for example, Nidden was part of East Prussia in 1932 (31), however, it was then located in Lithuania. Market trading in the postwar Soviet Union was not illegal (189), there were officially approved markets and illegal ones. The Soviet famine of 1946/47 was not caused by an extremely cold winter (215), but by a poor harvest in 1946. However, those minor points do not minimize the value of this study.

In the introduction, Eaton sets out the scene, delivers the historical background on East Prussia and its capital, raises her research questions, and touches on the major issues. The