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A. I. U. Polunov, Thomas C. Owen, L. G Zakharova
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RUSSIA IN THE **NINETEENTH CENTURY**

**AUTOCRACY, REFORM, AND
SOCIAL CHANGE, 1814-1914**



Alexander Polunov

*Edited by Thomas C. Owen
and Larissa G. Zakharova*

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before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Russia in the Nineteenth Century: Autocracy, Reform, and Social Change, 1814-1914: Autocracy, Reform, and Social Change, 1814-1914 (New Russian History):

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By Albert D. Mason
It was fine. Just what I expected and very useful.

This is a comprehensive interpretive history of Russia from the defeat of Napoleon to the eve of World War I. It is the first such work by a post-Soviet Russian scholar to appear in English. Drawing on the latest Russian and Western historical scholarship, Alexander Polunov examines the decay of the two central institutions of tsarist Russia: serfdom and autocracy. Polunov explains how the major social groups - the gentry, merchants, petty townspeople, peasants, and ethnic minorities - reacted to the Great Reforms, and why, despite the emergence of a civil society and capitalist institutions, a reformist, evolutionary path did not become an alternative to the Revolution of 1917. He provides detailed portraits of many tsarist bureaucrats and political reformers, complete with quotations from their writings, to explain how the principle of autocracy, although significantly weakened by the Great Reforms in mid-century, reasserted itself under the last two emperors. Polunov stresses the relevance, for Russians in the post-Soviet period, of issues that remained unresolved in the pre-Revolutionary period, such as the question of private property in land and the relationship between state regulation and private initiative in the economy.

"Ideally suited for surveys as well as specialized courses on Russia's long nineteenth century, Polunov's new text deftly synthesizes decades of Russian and Western scholarship. It is the comprehensive yet concise and clearly written narrative that those who teach this period have been looking for. I intend to make the book required reading for my students." - Donald J. Raleigh, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
"Polunov's interpretation of the last century of imperial rule marks a sharp break with Soviet-era histories of the late Russian Empire. Rather than view the events from the Napoleonic Wars to World War I as the prehistory of... 1917, he examines the decay of the two major institutions of the empire - serfdom and autocracy - from an essentially liberal and democratic standpoint.... His account helps to explain why the tsarist government successfully resisted fundamental change at crucial moments in the nineteenth century and why a reformist, evolutionary path did not become an alternative to the Bolshevik Revolution. The moral and political dramas described by Polunov have lost none of their relevance. The struggle between militarism and authoritarian rule on the one hand and humanitarianism and the rule of law on the other persists in the post-Soviet era as well." - From the foreword by Thomas C. Owen"