Specialists in the history of the French Revolution will find much that is familiar in Keitner's book. Since François Furet's revisionist challenge to "Jacobin" orthodoxy in the 1970s, historians have repeatedly exposed the weaknesses of an interpretation that takes the triumphalist claims of French revolutionaries at face value. Still, historians will welcome Keitner's sustained analysis of the idea of the nation and be gratified to read a compelling case for the continued relevance of a much-debated historical subject. Moreover, the author's audience includes political theorists and scholars of international relations whose understanding of a key concept in their fields will benefit from Keitner's historically informed analysis.

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Corinne Gaudin, *Ruling Peasants: Village and State in Late Imperial Russia,* DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007. Pp. 271. $40.00 (ISBN 978-0-87580-370-8).

This study carefully documents the Russian autocracy's effort to subject the peasant majority of the population to the rule of law. The new legislation did not only apply to taxes and policing; it was intended as well to regulate how to till and redistribute land, settle internal village disputes, conceive of property rights, and—eventually—to replace Russia's ubiquitous repartitional land communes with a regime of private ownership. The challenges of implementation are illuminated by Gaudin's careful focus on the daily administrative encounters between peasants and officials in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; Russia's three much-studied revolutions are given rather short shrift.

According to Gaudin, reformers of all sorts were inspired by a mission to save and protect a "dark" peasantry—ignorant, resistant to change, illiterate, simple, devious, dishonest, apathetic, volatile, and easily manipulated by venal elements (3). However, Gaudin does not go beyond these familiar negative stereotypes to consult the more nuanced views of leading contemporary legal scholars and economists, who neither romanticized peasants nor downplayed the significance of the peasantry's enthusiastic embrace of educational opportunities during the second half of the nineteenth century (E. Kingston-Mann, *In Search of the True West,* l991 and B. Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools,* 1987).

At the forefront of the government's rural policy was the network of land captains created in l889. These new state officials were to supervise peasant institutions and eliminate the corrupt dealings and defects of character that spoiled the autocracy's romantic vision of a simple and loyal commune peasantry. Gaudin carefully sets out the contradictions and misconceptions that made the land captains' mission so difficult to achieve. On the one hand, they were forced to rely on peasant officials to provide "insider" information about commune dealings, and sought the cooperation of peasants powerful enough to be somewhat independent of local pressures. On the other, land captains were convinced that these were precisely the sort of peasants who were most likely to be suspect (69). To further complicate the issue,

since land captains depended on elders for the information that would permit them to distinguish between valid and invalid appeals, they frequently refused to take action on complaints against village elders. Late nineteenth-century peasant appeals for legal redress—particularly by women—frequently evoked official laments for their "litigious" tendencies (91).

Gaudin convincingly demonstrates that many peasants welcomed land captains and other officials as authorities to whom they could appeal for resolution of village disputes. Between 1901–1904, the majority of peasant criminal cases related to insults and slander (107). However, after receiving public vindication, peasants did not seem interested in sentencing. In cases of theft or destruction of property, they preferred compensation or restitution over the arrest of the guilty party (98). According to Gaudin, the filing of complaints was often deployed as a scare tactic to force negotiation, shame family members, defend honor—"in other words, to achieve goals that had little to do with the substance of law" (130).

In the late nineteenth century, the supervisory efforts of new officials and state courts multiplied, and a growing number of the autocracy's policy-makers abandoned earlier commitments to the "commune ideal," focused instead on commune backwardness, and targeted communes for elimination. Anti-communal property reforms were introduced in the midst of the Revolution of l905–1907. It was revealing that households which had lost members since the last general repartition were among the first to petition for land titles to protect their holdings—a phenomenon that significantly exacerbated commune hostility toward the reform process (173). Women were particularly victimized by accompanying changes in inheritance laws that favored redistribution of property to males and permitted widows to inherit only 1/7 of the household's property (125).

In general, the author tends to agree with contemporary portrayals of the commune as the site of conflict rather than solidarity. In her view, commune expressions of unanimity simply represented a "snapshot" of the balance of power in the commune at a given time (149). It is at this point that Gaudin's relative neglect of the events of 1905 and 1917 are particularly telling. In both revolutions, communes unconstrained by the state collectively seized gentry land and inundated the government with petitions demanding the abolition of private property in land. In 1917, commune peasants reiterated this demand (and the Bolsheviks gained popular support by including it in their first Decree on Land).

In general, Gaudin's account brilliantly sets out the difficulties that arose for reformers attempting to rule a populace they viewed as backward (and wisely notes that post-1917 Soviet officials experienced similar challenges) (211). Unfortunately, her generalizations about early twentieth-century peasants and communes are rather too dependent on the views of government officials who were far from neutral on this topic and fail to adequately account for the commune's near universal resurgence after 1917.

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