Only two flaws detract from the account, one specific and one general. Specifically, the author appears to have little familiarity with farming. Hay itself does not "grow" but is grass that has been cut, dried and stored for feed; it is therefore a crop, along with grain. Pasture land for feeding livestock must be considered "arable land" since it produces grass even as animals feed upon it, and it needs fertilizing and seeding at regular intervals. Grass meadows, if cropped, do not produce infinitely but must be ploughed and seeded and fertilized every few years and thus are also "arable" land. Grass is not cut for hay at the same time of year (June or July) that grain is harvested (August or September). The width of strips of arable land are not measured in desiatiny but in sazheni like yards, nor is land measured in square desiatiny since a desiatina is itself a square measure like an acre.

On a more general level, the author’s ideological (or romantic) bias shows through in the out-of-hand dismissal of the Cossack “elite” as an alien element who “seized” lands, “plundered” resources, and “ransacked” the wealth of the Host for themselves (ch. 1 et passim). No one would deny that a Cossack elite of atamany and starshiny emerged. Indeed, they became the emperor’s instrument of rule. In Hetmanate Ukraine, closer to Moscow, they and their subjects were absorbed completely into the Russian polity, as we know from Zenon Kohut’s excellent study (Russian Centralism [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988], a work also not included in the bibliography). But if the author’s intention is to show how the Don Cossacks actually managed by the time of World War I to establish themselves as a nation-state in the making (pace Robert McNeal, who conducted a more political analysis of the Cossacks in his recent work Tsar and Cossack 1855-1914 [New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987] and came to the opposite conclusion), then he must show how the “anti-Cossack” elite could have melded so rapidly with the “rank-and-file” Cossacks after centuries of class antagonism. Internal civil strife after all did not break out prior to Bolshevik intervention. In the end, those “elite” Cossacks could not have been so “anti-Cossack” but must also have shared those Cossack values of equality and participatory democracy. The author needed to show that throughout the Host’s existence the “elite” was less a separate class than an organic leadership group with more interests in common with ordinary Cossacks than not.

The flaws are minor, however. The work is welcome: informative, imaginative, suggestive, timely – a significant addition to the growing literature on the Russian Imperial experience from within.

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In this, the second volume of Scenarios of Power, Richard Wortman completes his study of the Imperial regime by covering the half-century from 1855 to 1917: the reigns of Alexander II, Alexander III, and Nicholas II. Volume I, published in 1995
and shorter by about 100 pages, encompassed the reigns of seven emperors and empresses from Peter the Great to Nicholas I, over about one and one-half centuries. The first volume and part of this one are a warm-up for the tsar to whom Wortman gives most attention, Nicholas II, the last of the Romanovs. Alexanders II and III rate about 100 pages each; but Nicholas II receives 216 pages - the near-equivalent of a respectable monograph.

Central to both Scenarios volumes is this argument: the Russian monarchy early on created a myth of absolute power that it entrenched in the hearts and minds of the Russian people by steady rounds of thematic ceremonies, Imperial tours, and official publications. Imperial propagandists, bent on shaping the thinking of tsarist subjects, did so more successfully than their European counterparts because of the greater susceptibility to myth of Russia's vast and scattered peasant population.

That European monarchical regimes, using like methods to explain and justify themselves, fared poorly from the late eighteenth century on is a staple of history, for democratic ideas that came to the fore undermined the intellectual foundations of absolutism. Even though the Hobbesian argument for religion (its being necessary as a social stabilizer) kept Christian institutions intact, the claim that monarchism was essential to order lost credibility. In the end, European monarchs who survived contented themselves with serving as symbols of the nation. Scenarios of Power argues that the autocratic fantasies Nicholas II believed to the end were his only reality. The evidence Wortman presents makes clear that the last tsar of Imperial Russia had no conventional moorings from childhood by which to judge events and accordingly hastened the fall of the autocracy.

In Russia, political evolution had been following, belatedly, a course similar to that of the West. Wortman argues persuasively that Alexander II (1855-81) presided over the political and social evolution of his country from a Western perspective. His several reforms that included the liberation of the serfs and the restructuring of the judiciary fit into the sporadic Westernizing by tsars that began with the reign of Peter the Great in the early eighteenth century. First among the myths that Alexander II employed to justify his power was that only the traditional Russian autocracy could govern and defend Orthodox, gentry-dominated, and peasant-based Russia - a justification for autocratic power from classic European absolutism. He was the omnipotent and competent absolutist (until he lost his grip on affairs of state).

Wortman presents Alexander III (1881-94) as an intellectually limited ruler who powerfully altered the course of Russian history by changing the myth of the tsar to that of a ruler who was at one with the Russian peasantry. The main contribution of this volume is demonstrating the importance of Alexander III's reign to the fall of the Autocracy. Alexander III believed and therefore unrealistically ruled on the basis that his notions and feelings were right because he and the Russian peasants shared a heart and mind uniquely endowed by God - a divine link stressed over and over by Imperial propagandists and ceremonialists.

Alexander passed on that mind-set to his son, Nicholas II, who held firm in it with even greater conviction and zeal. He consequently dismissed as irrelevant opinion expressed in the new legislative assembly, the Duma, and in the press. Nicholas con-