

commonly accepted views of this period, she has brought to light a number of letters that will be of use to the European historian.

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THE RUSSIAN ANNEXATION OF THE CRIMEA, 1772-1783. By *Alan W. Fisher*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970. xvi, 180 pp. \$9.50.

This is a good narrative of the struggle of two powers to dominate the Crimea. Fisher has uncovered a wealth of information from Turkish archives and from published Turkish and Russian sources. He describes the problems of the Crimean peoples, who wished merely to follow their own interests, the Ottoman Empire which endeavored to maintain its hegemony, and the Russian Empire which sought to supplant it. With the ascendancy of Russia's power, the loyalty of the Crimean peoples to Turkish sovereignty was strained, and this threatened the northern defense perimeter of the ever-weakening Ottoman Empire. With her victory in the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-74, Catherine achieved a settlement which permitted the Crimea a semblance of independence but allowed Russia a greater influence there than ever before. Independence did not produce any greater unity among the Crimean peoples, and any attempt by a khan to assert autocratic authority met with forceful opposition. Khan Şahin Giray, hand-picked by Catherine, did not always follow her every wish. During his reign from 1777 to 1782-83, because he was an ineffectual leader and administrator, his attempted reforms to Westernize or Russianize the Crimea failed miserably. The Crimea suffered greatly from indigenous revolts, Ottoman military thrusts, and full-scale Russian invasions. Annexation remained the only alternative for Catherine to secure firmly this volatile territory and people.

Fisher is at his best when dealing with Ottoman and Crimean subjects. As for Russia, he makes only cursory mention of divisions of opinion on policy without exploring fully the decision-making process at the Russian court. Nor is there more than incidental recognition of the commercial worth of both the Crimea and the Black Sea to Russia, especially at a time when Catherine was initiating a broad policy of commercial expansion. A further elaboration of Catherine's policy toward the Crimea in the context of Russian foreign policy at that time would have been desirable.

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TSAR ALEXANDER I: PATERNALISTIC REFORMER. By *Allen McConnell*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970. viii, 232 pp. \$2.25, paper.

In this brief biography, designed primarily for use in undergraduate history courses, McConnell has synthesized the vast bibliography of older works on Alexander I's reign as well as a number of recent works on some of the less well known aspects of the Alexandrine age. Although the book contains little that will startle scholars working on this period, it will certainly help destroy various stereotypes long cherished by nonspecialists (the hackneyed division of Alexander's reign into clear-cut "liberal" and "reactionary" phases, the exaggerated emphasis upon Arakcheev, the idea that Alexander's inconsistencies resulted from weakness and an inability to control his advisers, etc.). McConnell has convincingly pointed up