



Fontanka 16: The Tsars' Secret Police

Charles A. Ruud, Sergei A. Stepanov

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From police headquarters at Fontanka 16 to the secret offices in major Russian post offices where specialists opened and read correspondence, the Okhranka blanketed the huge Russian empire with a network of secret agents and informers. In many cases they were involved in a desperate effort to track down terrorists before they could assassinate government officials and members of the imperial family. Charles Ruud and Sergei Stepanov have mined police archives, including Moscow's State Archive of the Russian Federation and the archives of the Hoover Institution, to produce this first post-Soviet look at the Okhranka's covert operations, which spread as far as Western Europe. In many ways Fontanka 16 reveals as much about the enemies of the tsars as the police who fought them. Although each side saw its cause as a struggle for good over evil, the authors show that the two sides strongly resembled one another in method, psychology, and morality. In this strange nether world of intrigue and deception, police agents often assisted revolutionaries and a number of former revolutionaries rose through the ranks of the secret police. The authors shed new light on the supposed anti-Semitism of the imperial government, as well as the origins of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

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