

Trade consisted of the goods customarily exchanged throughout the Middle Ages, but Western salt and Eastern grain, the latter coming chiefly from Estonia itself, came to constitute its backbone. Textiles were important, but their place is well characterized by the author when he remarks that an ell (more or less one yard) of the finest drapery was worth about as much as the total production an Estonian peasant could bring to the market in a whole year. Significantly, the Swedish empire, to which Reval belonged in the seventeenth century, had little to offer. Monopolies hindered Reval's merchants, and Swedish iron served mainly, in transit, as a means of payment to the Russians and the Dutch. Sweden's Finnish subjects, especially the peasants, sailed in small boats to Estonia and traded directly with Baltic landlords and peasants in official and smuggled goods, notwithstanding all efforts of the Reval merchants to get that traffic into their own hands.

Russia remained a key factor for Reval's traders even after she was pushed back from the Baltic shores by Sweden (and Poland). As a "wunderseltsame Nation, die aus geringen Dingen leichtlich grossen Alarm machen," the Russians understood how to secure preferential treatment for themselves. For them, even the outmoded but persistent tradition of the Reval firms of fighting all direct contact between visiting foreign traders in order to force them to channel their transactions through the hands of Reval merchants (prohibitions of trade *von Gast zu Gast*) had to be modified. But good connections with the Russian hinterland, such as even Estonia's second port, Narva, enjoyed, were lacking, and Reval's position was weak. The author illustrates his presentation by references to account books of an important merchant, Berndt Rodde, which have survived.

While Soom's book may not be as important as his two earlier fundamental works on seventeenth-century Baltic history (*Der baltische Getreidehandel* and *Der Herrenhof in Estland im 17. Jahrhundert*), it still throws light on many essential problems. In particular, it shows certain very special, and perhaps "backward," traits of the Eastern trade. Insight is also given into interesting side issues. For example, the book shows that occasionally a certain peculiarly modern attention was paid to the cause of the "poor." When the nobles sought to monopolize the profitable internal salt trade, their efforts were defeated, for it was argued that only the poorer people should have the benefit of it "*weil solches christlich und billig*" (p. 129). Two other very modern problems are illustrated by the descriptions of the contradictions between law and practice and of the endless bureaucratic interference and regulations, which sought to secure justice for all but only engendered ever new rules. Thus Soom's book, based on an extensive and minute study of the sources and showing his accustomed mastery of his subject, offers more than its title and the position of Reval in the seventeenth century would seem to promise.

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RUSSIAN PISTOLS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. By Leonid Tarassuk. York, Pa.: George Shumway, 1968. 35 pp. 39 plates. Paper.

Leonid Tarassuk's brief work, consisting of two illustrated articles reprinted from the *Burlington Magazine* (November and December 1967), reviews most of the latest research on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Russian handguns, with particular emphasis on seventeenth-century pistols. On the basis of literary evidence Mr. Tarassuk concludes that pistols were used in Russia during the second half of the sixteenth century, but that they were few in number and of West European

provenance. The earliest physical example Tarassuk has found of a domestically manufactured pistol dates from the early 1620s, and he admits that this as well as later models employed West European technology.

Although the author presents a useful and learned essay on Muscovite pistols, it should be noted that he displays an inordinate concern for deluxe specimens, neglecting the weapons that were used in combat. Similarly, his discussion of the industrial apparatus required in their manufacture will not excite historians of technology, although he does summarize rather efficiently the record of how the Muscovite state first relied on imports during the first half of the seventeenth century and then acquired the technological wherewithal to engage in domestic mass production. In all, it is a good but exceedingly skimpy work, valuable only because so little is available in English on the topic.

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RUSSIA IN THE ERA OF PETER THE GREAT. By *L. Jay Oliva*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969. viii, 184 pp. \$5.95.

Teachers who are bored with textbook treatments of Peter's reign or who have tired of V. O. Kliuchevsky and B. H. Sumner on the subject will welcome Oliva's foray into the field. His volume may herald a new trend in classroom-oriented writing on Russian history—away from the orthodox survey toward reinterpretations of more restricted periods and topics. Ian Grey and company may soon encounter healthy competition.

Addressed to students and general readers (those favorite targets of publishers' sales departments), Oliva's concise study has something to offer the specialist, too. Its strengths include clarity of perspective, balance of generalization and specifics, and sprightly writing. In contrast to previous scholarship, Oliva concentrates on the era rather than the man; he analyzes Petrine policies against the backdrop of early modern Europe. When combined with a thoughtful analysis of Peter's Muscovite inheritance, this "horizontal" perspective generates fresh insights into the motivations, actions, and limitations of the Tsar-Reformer. Peter becomes at once more comprehensible in terms of his own age and still more remarkable as a successful practitioner of several policies that, in retrospect, look astonishingly modern. To my mind, Oliva has struck a better balance between biographical detail, general developments, and interpretation than either Kliuchevsky or Sumner has. He provides a more solid appraisal of seventeenth-century Muscovy and of Peter's early career. Also stimulating are his analysis of Petrine politics, especially the role of the nobility therein, and his examination of the social forces that supported and opposed Peter's reforms.

As a sophisticated popularization Oliva's book realizes its purpose. Specialists may be less impressed, however. The author gives little new information; he scarcely indicates his sources; his bibliography is extremely selective; his buoyant style may irritate professional historians; and he has, inevitably, oversimplified some problems. He commits some factual errors as well. For example, the Trinity Monastery and Troitsa Monastery appear as two different institutions (in general, transliteration, translation, and the spelling of names, places, and technical terms are quite inconsistent); Tsar Michael (d. 1645) receives posthumous credit for the Ulozhenie of 1649. The important Preobrazhensky Office (*sic*) is mentioned twice but not explained. Read literally, a sentence on page 31 implies there were twenty thousand