

ROSSIIA V PERIOD REFORM PETRA I. Edited by *N. I. Pavlenko, L. A. Nikiforov, and M. Ia. Volkov*. Moscow: "Nauka," 1973. 384 pp. 1.88 rubles.

Though it does not say so, this volume grew out of a conference held in 1972 at the Soviet Academy's Institute of History to commemorate the tercentenary of Peter the Great's birth. Together these articles provide a measure of the state of Petrine studies in the Soviet Union, and perhaps of the state of contemporary Soviet historical scholarship generally. Yet because the articles vary considerably in length, topic, approach, and content, it is harder to judge the value of the book's overall contribution to Petrine scholarship regardless of provenance—except to say that in this respect the sum of the twelve parts assembled here is probably greater than the whole.

The major thesis underlying the articles seems to be that Peter's reign was of crucial importance in Russian history and that Peter himself was, to quote the editors' quotation from Engels, "truly a great man" (p. 5). A secondary concern apparent in at least some of the articles is to argue the significance for today of certain Petrine developments. Thus L. A. Nikiforov celebrates, in a surprisingly elementary and indeed nationalistic diplomatic survey (pp. 9–39), Westernization under Peter and his achievement of Great Power status for Russia. Again, N. F. Demidova contends, as it were ahistorically, that the Treaty of Nerchinsk was a "major defeat for Russian diplomacy in the Far East" (pp. 289–310); for by "conceding" to the Chinese "Russian Priamur'e" for short-term political gain, the government of Peter's half-sister and rival, Sofia, necessarily precipitated a "prolonged struggle for the return of the lost lands" that was "finally resolved [*sic*] only in the middle of the nineteenth century." In such judgments, as in the ambiguity concerning the book's origin and central theme or figure, we see reflected at the scholarly level the positive and patriotic but at the same time curiously equivocal tone that was to be noticed of the Petrine tercentenary observances in the Soviet Union generally (for which see *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, Summer 1974, pp. 319 ff.).

But Demidova's article is valuable for the light it throws, in part from archival sources, on politics in Moscow in 1687, when the contest for supreme power between Sofia and her party and Peter and his was joined. And in this regard her work exemplifies the best of the articles printed here: most notably, M. D. Rabinovich's study of the Petrine officer corps in 1721 (pp. 133–71), from which we learn that as high as 90 percent of the regular army officers were in some sense literate, that a large number of infantry officers were not of gentry origin, and that some 22.7 percent of these came from the taxpaying classes of society—thus constituting an entirely new element in the Russian army for the reward and preservation of whom, it is suggested, Peter introduced the Table of Ranks. Other core articles include Iu. A. Tikhonov on peasant obligations in the Petrine period (pp. 199–214); S. M. Troitsky on Prince Menshikov's economic activities, which in their relative volume and diversity resemble those of a modern conglomerate (pp. 215–48); N. B. Golikova on the internal history of the Astrakhan rebellion of 1705–6 (pp. 249–88); and M. A. Alekseevna on the work particularly of the Zubov brothers but also on engraving and printmaking as a whole under Peter, the documentary importance of which, like the art's importance in the cultural history of the period, is not always realized (pp. 337–61).

N. I. Pavlenko's essay on Peter's "social-political views" (pp. 40–102) is the

longest and possibly the most interesting of the collection. Somewhat revisionist in the Soviet context, it is remarkable for its stress on Peter's personal significance, its abundance of detail, its suggestive qualities, and—it must be said—its analytic meagerness. Peter himself is also the focus of T. S. Maikova's study of the composition of Peter's "Gistoriia" of the Swedish war (pp. 103–32), an essay which abundantly documents the point that Peter was, not just as patron but actually as initiator, author, and editor, a founder, perhaps *the* founder, of modern Russian historiography. Also in the biographical mode is the late A. I. Zaozersky's sensible piece, "Field Marshal Sheremetev and the Ruling Circle of the Petrine Period" (pp. 172–98). M. Iu. Volkov contributes (pp. 311–36) an overly long and disputatious analysis of *starets* Avraamii's "Epistle" to Peter, which students of that episode, and of the first years of Peter's government, will nonetheless want to consult.

The volume concludes with a bibliography by M. P. Pavlova-Silvanskaia of 158 works relating to Peter and his times which were published outside the Soviet Union between 1946 and 1970: a most impressive and useful list.

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THE EMANCIPATION OF THE RUSSIAN NOBILITY, 1762–1785. By Robert E. Jones. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973. xii, 326 pp. \$12.50.

Professor Jones's monograph is an expansion of his doctoral dissertation, "The Russian Gentry and the Provincial Reform of 1775" (Cornell University, 1968). It explores various stages in the formulation of state policy toward the nobility during the period between the Manifesto of 1762, which offered noble servitors a conditional opportunity to leave state service, and the Charter of 1785, which redefined the group's legal and political status. Catherine's policies toward the nobility, Jones argues, owed less to the strength of a noble opposition than to problems "she encountered in trying to provide Russia, especially the vast and underdeveloped provinces, with a government capable of defending and promoting the national interest" (p. vi). Jones's aim is "to relate Catherine's treatment of the nobility to the goals of her domestic policy and to her perception of the state's interests" (p. vii).

Relying on published documents, laws, and secondary literature, primarily in Russian and English, as well as on limited use of selected manuscripts, Jones introduces and comments on the principal episodes and issues concerning the relations between state and nobility: for example, the disputed circumstances surrounding Peter's Manifesto; Catherine's early efforts to forestall the extension of noble privilege without antagonizing the noblemen who acquiesced in her rule; conditions in the provinces as reflected in documents of the Legislative Commission; the limitations of bureaucratic absolutism; the sources, contents, and in part the implementation of the provincial reform; and the significance of the Charter to the Nobility in 1785.

Jones contends that a reassessment of the state's requirements at the end of the Seven Years' War permitted the release of noblemen from compulsory service. He affirms, however, with earlier scholars, that the state could not dispense with some