

of the army) and the urban population, and for fear that such cooperation might threaten its power, the government dispensed with *zemskii sobors* and discouraged collective petitions. Of course, the local elected officials continued to function and, in fact, the government actually gave the elders new responsibilities in the late 1670s. But as the century passed, the central bureaucracy brought the local elders under increasingly strict tutelage, and, by about 1680, the “*zemlia*” was virtually silent. Peter I had only to give a borrowed European dress to the absolutism that had already come into being in the second half of the seventeenth century.

This brief and, of necessity, oversimplified summary of Torke’s central contentions gives only a hint of the value of his work. Each individual chapter is an excellent monograph in its own right. His discussion of the history and significance of the *zemskii sobor* is particularly masterful.

Torke’s work displays some of the strengths and weaknesses of *Verfassungsgeschichte*. He pays careful attention to the legal norms and cultural assumptions of the period and is extremely sensitive to the meaning and overtones of historical terminology. At the same time, his work occasionally presents a different semantic problem—a tendency to reify his own analytical constructs, especially “*zemlia*” itself. It is sometimes hard to tell which social groups made up the “*zemlia*.” For example, at several crucial points in his argument, “*zemlia*” seems to shrink and become just a fancy word for the merchants or the urban population.

Torke’s excellent book makes important contributions not only to the study of seventeenth-century Russian institutions and society, but also to the continuing debate on Russia’s place in the scheme of world history. From his analysis of the “*zemlia*,” Torke concludes, with characteristic clarity and common sense, that seventeenth-century Russia was neither an absolute monarchy of the European type nor an oriental despotism: there were no estates with corporate rights that could serve to counterbalance royal power, and at the same time, the tsar—unlike the oriental despot—was limited by Christian moral imperatives and customary laws on inheritance. At that time, the nonstate sectors of Russian society were comparatively weak and inarticulate, but they were nevertheless indispensable to the administration, and, on occasion, they were capable of exerting decisive pressure on the government. This society—closely tied to the state but far from supine before it—is labeled “state conditioned” (*staatsbedingte*) by Torke, and is, therefore, placed somewhere between Western Europe and Asia on the historical spectrum.

ROBERT O. CRUMMEY  
*University of California, Davis*

RUSLANDS ALLIANCEPOLITIK EFTER FREDEN I NYSTAD: EN STUDIE I DET SLESVIGSKE RESTITUTIONSSPØRGSMÅL INDTIL 1732. By *Hans Bagger*. Copenhagen University, Institute of Slavonic Studies, Study Series, vol. 4. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1974. 304 pp. English summary. Dkr. 60, paper.

Based on extensive archival studies in the USSR, Austria, Denmark, and Holstein, this ambitious study is important not only for its analysis of the motivation of Russian foreign policy during the mid-1720s, but also for its new interpretation of the genesis of the Supreme Privy Council in 1726. Unencumbered by previous

great power status or any traditional diplomatic orientation, Russia was able to sit out the reshuffling of European alliances after the close of the Great Northern War. The rise of two opposing blocs in 1724–25 forced Russia to take a stand at a time when Peter I's death (in February 1725) had just created a vacuum in Russia's diplomatic decision-making process. Bagger shows that the April 1725 decision to seek an alliance with England and France was based on a long report—previously thought to date from August 1725 at the earliest (N. N. Bantysh-Kamenskii, G. A. Nekrasov)—submitted by Vice-Chancellor A. I. Osterman. Because Osterman felt that Russia's choice of foreign policy system must be based on her commitments to Duke Karl Friedrich of Holstein (and to Sweden), as formulated in the Russo-Swedish treaty of 1724, his report analyzed the possibilities of fulfilling these commitments within the context of an Austrian or an Anglo-French alliance. Finding these alternatives equally amenable to Russia's interests, Osterman thought that an Austrian alliance would be preferable if Schleswig were to be restored to Karl Friedrich by military means, while an Anglo-French alliance would further a restoration by diplomatic means. Bagger concludes that the Russian decision to seek an alliance with England and France was heavily influenced by this consideration, and it is this conclusion that motivates his inquiry into the role of the Gottorp/Schleswig question in Russian foreign policy between 1713 and 1732.

Unlike B. L. Viazemskii and others who saw the creation of the Supreme Privy Council as an attempt by the aristocracy to limit the powers of the sovereign, Bagger argues convincingly that the Supreme Privy Council was established to fill the vacuum in the diplomatic and military decision-making process created by Peter I's death the preceding year. Because the colleges of foreign affairs, war, and admiralty had never been subordinate to the Senate, but instead directly responsible to the tsar, and because Catherine I was incapable of replacing Peter, a new decision-making agency had to be created if the independent colleges and the Senate were to remain coequal in status. The author explains the Council's emergence in February 1726 by the fact that immediate and vital foreign policy decisions were required in view of the breakdown of negotiations with England and France, an offer of alliance from Austria, and the overhanging threat of a general war between the Vienna and Hanover blocs. On the basis of new source materials, Bagger shows that, in what proved to be a successful attempt to obtain a central role in the shaping of Russian foreign policy, it was Karl Friedrich who took the initiative in establishing the Council and defining its responsibilities.

Bagger's somewhat overoptimistic treatment of Osterman's 1725 report as a document presented by a nonpartisan civil servant and his unfamiliarity with William Slany's discussion of the genesis of the Supreme Privy Council ("Russian Central Governmental Institutions, 1725–1741," Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1956) cannot detract from the excellence of this volume. It is a work which deserves translation into a more accessible language.

MICHAEL F. METCALF  
*University of Stockholm*