

the West. Stökl tends to attribute this silence to ignorance; still, the argument from silence is particularly dangerous in analyzing a source for the kind of information it does not ordinarily seek to provide. In any event the essay is, in the author's words, a "preliminary attempt," and is of value not so much for its conclusions as for its wealth of detail. I found particularly instructive discussions of terminology: the meaning of ethnic names, the Italian influence on Muscovite diplomatic vocabulary, and much more besides.

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THE "CHOSEN COUNCIL" OF IVAN IV: A REINTERPRETATION.

By *Antony N. Grobovsky*. New York: Theo. Gaus' Sons, 1969. vii, 171 pp.

Grobovsky's book is the outcome of his doctoral thesis. His subject, "The Chosen Council," is one that in view of its complexity demands a most detailed knowledge of the source material of the period and a clear realization of the historical scene in the forties and fifties of the sixteenth century in Muscovite Russia, as well as complete familiarity with the historiography of the problem as it stands at the moment. The author has bravely taken the bull by the horns and produced a not uninteresting piece of research, although it would not appear that he has been able to reach any incontestable conclusions. He is certainly correct in his criticism of S. V. Bakhrushin's theories both on the Chosen Council and on the general situation at that moment, for Bakhrushin's theories on the government of Adashev do not hold water. Bakhrushin could not or would not take into consideration the role of the church and of Metropolitan Macarius, and tends to interject too modern and too contemporary an approach into sixteenth-century politics. For if the part played by the metropolitan is not taken into consideration, no picture of the Muscovite state at this time can be arrived at which is either true or comprehensible. It has long been my contention (cf. *Slavonic and East European Review*, 40, no. 94 [1961]: 258-59; 38, no. 91 [1960]: 569-71; 37, no. 89 [1959]: 532-34) that these theories, which have so hindered the development of Soviet historical thought, should be re-examined. Grobovsky has done so, and deserves the credit for it. Unfortunately, he is not as yet fully conversant with this period, and therefore his book tends to have rather shaky foundations.

Grobovsky exerts himself to the utmost to prove that the Chosen Council as an institution, or as a private group or society, did not exist. He considers that they were merely well-intentioned individuals. Possibly, but then, too, possibly not. Bakhrushin was, of course, in error when he metamorphosed the Privy Council into the "Chosen Council." I. I. Smirnov in his excellent study, "The Problem of the Chosen Council," in *Ocherki politicheskoi istorii russkogo gosudarstva 30-50kh godov XVI veka* (1958) nearly succeeded in providing the key to this problem, but when on the threshold of apparent success, reverted to acquiescence in Bakhrushin's theories. To my mind, Kurbsky's words on the Chosen Council in his *History of the Grand Prince of Moscow* are much clearer than Grobovsky is prepared to admit. Had he started by delving more deeply into Kurbsky's meaning, it is possible that he would have been off to a better start. Grobovsky's main difficulty appears to be that he seems as yet unable to clarify for himself Muscovite governmental functions and structure. Thus for example he is attracted by the fallacies advanced by D. N. Alshitz and tends to be mesmerized by the subject's complexities. Unfortunately, too, while Grobovsky cites two of my articles, he has

neglected the most important point—for his research—in a third article which he fails to quote at all.

Grobovsky's book will certainly remain in the bibliography on this subject, and it will remain because it is an interesting and bold attempt to solve one of the so-called mysteries of the reign of Ivan the Terrible. It is to be hoped that this author will continue to develop his research.

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NACHALO OPRICHNINY. By R. G. Skrynnikov. Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1966. 417 pp. 1 ruble, 95 kopeks.

OPRICHNYI TERROR. By R. G. Skrynnikov. Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo universiteta, 1969. 339 pp. 2 maps. 2 rubles, 25 kopeks.

These volumes provide an exhaustive investigation of Muscovite political history, 1550–72, concentrating on the Oprichnina (1565–72). Skrynnikov's scholarship displays a subtle use of multifarious sources (including an ingenious reconstruction of a crucial document—the *sinodik opal'nykh*, appended to volume 2, which lists the Oprichnina's victims), cogent argumentation (especially in the criticism of the views of A. A. Zimin), and a refreshing absence of dogma. His lengthy study may prove definitive.

If Skrynnikov's theses are rather simple and unsurprising, they are developed in complex fashion and great detail. He sees in the Oprichnina a political device whose policies and composition changed over time but which was basically intended to surmount a crisis caused by the monarchy's alienation of influential strata of the ruling elite. The monarchy, which Skrynnikov somewhat confusingly identifies at times with Ivan personally and also with various family or elite groupings, attempted to increase its independence by curtailing the aristocracy's traditional participation in governance via the boyar *duma*. While formally divided into three main subgroups—titled aristocracy (*kniashata*), Muscovite boyars, and appanage princes—the aristocracy had some common interests as the dominant "feudal estate." Nevertheless, constant internecine rivalries for primacy tended to ally the Muscovite boyars and appanage princes behind the monarchy in opposition to the aristocratic pretensions of the *kniashata*. Other potential political forces were the numerous service gentry and the church. Skrynnikov outlines a complicated struggle among the contending aristocratic factions throughout the 1550s. Their competition for power remained in bounds until 1560–61, when multiple disputes—over foreign policy, land tenure, and dynastic considerations—crippled the influence of the titled aristocracy, appanage princes, and allied gentry in favor of a new governing coalition of Muscovite boyars (especially the Zakharin clan—relatives of the *tsar*) who backed Ivan's aspirations for an increased role in government. Faced with powerful opposition in the boyar *duma*, this government—or factions of it—adopted inept and repressive policies which broadened the opposition while narrowing its own political base. To retain power Ivan's government had to secure greater support from the service gentry, but instead of promulgating a broad pro-gentry reform, the *tsar*, Basmanov, and company chose the very dangerous course of compelling the opposition to accept the creation of a privileged praetorian guard—the Oprichnina.

Skrynnikov divides the Oprichnina's evolution into two periods: from its in-