

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.

NIKOLAY ANDREYEV
Cambridge University

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-

ception early in 1565 until the Zemsky Sobor of July 1566, and from then until its abolition in 1572. The first period saw the government's previous antiprincely policies extended to include deportation of many titled aristocrats and confiscation of their lands. To refute assertions by S. B. Veselovsky and A. A. Zimin that these measures had no specific antiprincely bias, Skrynnikov painstakingly enumerates those deported and shows that a few princely clans bore the brunt of the early repressions. This policy only increased antagonism, causing the government at the Sobor of 1566 to compromise, if only briefly. With its political base further undermined by the burgeoning opposition, Ivan's government in desperation unleashed mass terror. This second period of the Oprichnina revolved around the fabricated, interrelated "conspiracies" of Prince V. A. Staritsky, the boyar I. P. Fedorov, and the Novgorod region. The years 1567-72 witnessed the absurd culmination of the Oprichnina, whose terror undercut the very supports of the monarchy and ultimately decimated its own creators. Far from masterminding the terror, Tsar Ivan is portrayed as one of its victims—a fearful, unbalanced ruler whose weaknesses were exploited by henchmen like Maliuta Skuratov. Indeed, the author's only quotation from Engels is to the effect that reigns of terror spring not from terror-inspiring personalities but from persons who are themselves terror-stricken.

Skrynnikov ably analyzes the Oprichnina's maniacal logic and multiple contradictions. En route he demolishes Zimin's contentions concerning its supposed anti-appanage, antichurch, anti-Novgorod, and antipeasant policies. These are all seen as unplanned by-products of the government's intolerance of opposition; they are also linked to the Oprichnina's basic economic policy of brazen plundering and to the intrigues of individuals. Moreover, the reasons for the Novgorod campaign of 1570 and its destructiveness are sharply qualified. The author's conclusion deftly criticizes previous interpretations, deflates the number of Oprichnina victims (about four thousand is his own estimate, based on the *sinodik*), and cautiously assays its main results as weakening the aristocracy and the church, while strengthening the gentry and the bureaucracy. Skrynnikov's is scholarship of the highest order.

JOHN T. ALEXANDER
University of Kansas

DESCRIPTION OF MOSCOW AND MUSCOVY, 1557. By *Sigmund von Herberstein*. Edited by *Bertold Picard*. Translated by *J. B. C. Grundy*. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1969. vi, 105 pp. \$5.00.

In 1549 Sigmund von Herberstein published his *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii*, a description of Muscovy based on his missions as ambassador from the Habsburg court in 1517-18 and 1526-27. In 1557 there appeared Herberstein's own slightly expanded translation into German. In 1966 Bertold Picard published a modernized version of the German text, which rearranged the narrative under five topics—the country, the people, the state, the Muscovite economy, and religion—and in the process omitted a considerable part of the original. This edition was accompanied by a brief biography of the author and a still briefer summary, by Stefan Verosta, of the diplomatic background of his journeys. Now Picard's volume is available in an English translation.

But for whom is it intended? The rearrangement and abridgment of the text make it unsatisfactory for the scholar. The absence of a critical apparatus makes it positively dangerous for the student. And is the general reader really going to