

search for furs and sea-otter skins, and of the two centuries of agonized effort to maintain the settlement. Attempts to establish agriculture in Kamchatka and along the Okhotsk coast failed almost completely because of the harsh climate and the inefficiency of peasant and administrator. Supplies had therefore to be transported vast distances from the Yenisei–Lake Baikal region of Siberia over rivers, mountains, and sea, through swamps, floods, and snows and in the face of disease, incompetence, corruption, and neglect. The cost was appalling in human and animal life, in money and goods. Rarely were supplies sufficient. Scurvy and other diseases were rampant in the Far Eastern settlements; death from starvation was far from uncommon.

The author portrays this struggle to feed the Far East with a most impressive wealth of detail. This book is one of the best examples of scholarship in the field of Russian historical geography. A great quantity of archival and other material has been used, including reports of administrators and travelers. Every statement and statistic is carefully documented; the twenty-five page bibliography is a model for the researcher in Russian geography. Gibson has indeed set a standard of painstaking and thorough investigation, which one trusts will end the belief of some Western writers that Russian sources for historical geography are inaccessible or that their study in depth is unnecessary. From his sources the author has extracted such a mass of detail and such a quantity of facts and figures that at times the reader is rather overwhelmed. At times too the conclusions he makes on the basis of the facts are rather repetitive. One feels that the points are being remorselessly hammered home, in the manner of an early Eisenstein film. Yet in many ways the theme is as dramatic as any of Eisenstein's. The reader is left wondering, as Gibson himself does in his final chapter, why the Russians bothered to pay such a cost for their north Pacific sea coast. Nevertheless they did, and despite human failings and the manifold hazards of a cruel environment, they succeeded in keeping their grip on the Far East. This excellent book perhaps tells us more about the Russians and their history than the title would suggest, and certainly helps explain why Alaska was sold. The present Soviet Union owes the contribution to its wealth from the gold of the Kolyma and the fisheries of Kamchatka to those two centuries of suffering and loss. One must congratulate both Mr. Gibson for a book that all concerned with the field should read and the publisher for its attractive presentation.

R. A. FRENCH
University College London

PISEMISKY: A PROVINCIAL REALIST. By *Charles A. Moser*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969. ix, 269 pp. \$10.00.

Charles Moser has written the first full-length account in English of Pisemsky's public career and work. It is a solid, scholarly volume, and certainly an important one for those interested in Pisemsky and his times. Among its virtues is an extensive and extremely useful bibliography of works by and about Pisemsky, including an exhaustive list of translations in a variety of European languages.

Moser calls his book "an essay in literary history," rather than a critical analysis of Pisemsky's literary work. At his best, Moser does achieve his intent. The second chapter, which deals with Pisemsky's arrival in Petersburg, is particularly effective in this regard. Here he presents a lively account of the various Petersburg literary factions in the second half of the 1850s and draws a fascinating

picture of the reception given the "peasant" from the provinces by the Europeanized literary world. Indeed, throughout the book Moser follows the literary and personal relationships between Pisemsky and a whole flock of the leading figures of the age—Turgenev, Ostrovsky, Nekrasov, Apollon Grigoriev, and Dmitrii Pisarev among others. The treatment of these relationships is important not only for the light it throws on Pisemsky's literary fortunes but also for the total picture it provides of the shifting literary attitudes of the age.

However, the author is not wholly successful in his essay in literary history. When, for example, he comes to that crucial novel in Pisemsky's career, *Troubled Seas*, he gives a faithful description of everyone's dissatisfaction with the work, but fails to explain why Pisemsky's star fell at this moment. Was it the weaknesses of the novel or the biases of its readers? In short, Moser leans toward journalistic accuracy when the subject matter cries out for judicious analysis. The problem Moser fails to come to grips with is not so much the decline of Pisemsky's reputation after *Troubled Seas*—he was not a great writer, as Moser freely admits—but rather the seemingly incomprehensible respect his extraordinarily gifted contemporaries accorded him. We are told that Leskov, among other major writers of the period, greatly admired Pisemsky's fiction. Later critical opinion has clearly diverged from this judgment; however, Moser is never able to account for the importance Pisemsky enjoyed in the estimation of his contemporaries.

A considerable part of the book is given over to plot synopses for nearly every work Pisemsky wrote—undoubtedly a service for the numerous readers with a serious interest in Russian literature who have read very little of Pisemsky's total output. These passages do not, however, really contribute much to the author's aim of illuminating literary history.

In a final chapter Moser attempts to identify those qualities of Pisemsky's fiction which mark him as one of the most representative realists in nineteenth-century Russia. He judiciously calls attention to Pisemsky's representation of social reality as "the unlovely and corrupt." He notes that material gain and "physiological urges" operate as the motivating forces behind social action in his work. Such qualities ally Pisemsky with the tradition of Balzac and Flaubert; but while Moser briefly compares Pisemsky with all his major Russian contemporaries, he neglects the foreign writers to whom this Russian is in many ways more akin.

In sum, this study is a useful volume, but fails to achieve its principal aim—an analysis of literary history—in a wholly convincing way.

KARL D. KRAMER
University of Michigan

KONSTANTIN PETROVIČ POBEDONOSCEV UND DIE KIRCHENPOLITIK DES HEILIGEN SINOD, 1880–1905. By *Gerhard Simon*. Kirche im Osten: Studien zur osteuropäischen Kirchengeschichte und Kirchenkunde, monographienreihe vol. 7. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969. 280 pp. DM 34.

The title fails to suggest the riches of this volume. While the author has dealt at length with the famous Over Procurator, he also presents a broad picture of the Russian Orthodox Church before and during his incumbency, and in the final chapter evaluates his rule. This is a significant work, impressive in the wealth of its sources and in breadth of understanding of Russian religious life. It is convincing and leaves no important question unanswered.