

Bergamini is well aware that the last male Romanov died in 1730 and the last daughter of a Romanov on Christmas Day 1761 (O.S.). He remarks that Catherine I was "a ruler with no Romanov blood," that Ivan VI (the baby who "ruled" Russia for just over a month) was "a Romanov who had only one-quarter Russian blood [*sic*]," that Peter III was "mostly German and Swedish but a true [*sic*] Romanov," and that Catherine II was "neither Romanov nor even Russian." Yet, rejecting Catherine's own account of her son's paternity, Bergamini follows the widespread practice of accounting Paul and his descendants, the House of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp, as also true Romanovs. Had he not done so, of course, he would have had to sacrifice more than half his book and the juiciest part at that.

If the title is misleading as regards the "dynasty," it is no less so with respect to the "tragic." Not that there was no tragedy connected with this dynasty. A writer in quest of tragedy need have looked no farther than the relations of Peter with his son Alexis, tragic for the father no less than for the son, but Bergamini so presents the story that it shrinks to the proportions of a shabby, even sordid, melodrama. Only when he reaches Peter III does Bergamini emphasize that he was "the tragic successor to his Aunt Elizabeth" and proceeds to treat the reader to a slapstick tragicomedy, changing his tune to "Peter's real tragedy probably dated from his smallpox." His next candidate for honors is "the tragic Paul I," contrasted to his "enigmatic" son Alexander I. In the end it turns out that Nicholas II's uncritical admiration of his father "may have been the ultimate tragedy of the dynasty," though Rasputin's "two-facedness is really the whole root of the Romanov tragedy" and the fact "that the intellectual upsurge [before 1914] escaped Nicholas II is part of his tragedy." In short, it was not "The Tragic Dynasty" but the tragic Nicholas.

Serious omissions include failure to clothe the bones of the old-fashioned notion that Peter I "thoroughly reordered the government, the church, the economy, and the social system," scarcely compensated by a chapter beginning "Catherine's outrageous sex life is the main basis of her legendary status and worldwide fame" (p. 227), more than one-third of which is devoted to a painstaking catalogue of over a score of her "lovers." Peter III's release of the nobility from service is called "a landmark in Russian social history" but is deemed less worthy of comment than the fact that Catherine, in pursuit of her fallen husband, "wore a broad-brimmed hat, her hair was tied in a single ribbon, and she was all green and red in the uniform of the Preobrazhenskoe" (p. 224). Nicholas I is dismissed in antiquated conventional terms, but with confusion of pudding and pie.

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FEEDING THE RUSSIAN FUR TRADE: PROVISIONMENT OF THE OKHOTSK SEABOARD AND THE KAMCHATKA PENINSULA, 1639-1856. By *James R. Gibson*. Madison, Milwaukee, and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969. xix, 337 pp. \$15.00.

In the world-wide saga of European expansion and settlement, few chapters tell a story of greater difficulty than that of the Russian colonization of Siberia. Outstanding for hardship and problems was the establishment of the Russians on the Far Eastern coasts, around the Sea of Okhotsk and on the Kamchatka Peninsula. Mr. Gibson gives the account of the original Russian settlement, spurred on by the

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.

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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