

PETER THE GREAT. Edited by *L. Jay Oliva*. Great Lives Observed series. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970. viii, 181 pp. \$5.95, cloth. \$1.95, paper.

The inclusion of Peter I in this series adds his name to those of Bismarck, Jesus Christ, Huey Long, Chairman Mao, and George Washington, among many others whose lives have been subjected to the same treatment: "each volume . . . views the character and achievement of a great world figure in three perspectives—through his own words, through the opinions of his contemporaries, and through retrospective judgments—thus combining the intimacy of autobiography, the immediacy of eye-witness observation, and the objectivity of modern scholarship." Terms of reference such as these look attractive and original, but the result of their application in this instance suffers from the haphazardness of a collage. The introduction and the three parts—"Peter the Great Looks at the World," "Peter the Great Viewed by His Contemporaries," and "Peter the Great in History"—show virtually the same view four times over. Instead of improving the perspective, the reiteration upsets the chronological sequence of events and breaks up the thematic unity of the material. Thus the *Journal* of Peter I quoted in part 1 could be said to form part of "the official view" just as much as Feofan Prokopovich's Funeral Oration in part 2 (the less rhetorical and more critical sermon that Prokopovich preached in praise of Peter five months later would have been a better choice); Lomonosov, a boy of fourteen when Peter died, was less of a "contemporary" than Voltaire, who was born in 1694 and whose view of the tsar is given under the heading "Peter the Great in History," although it is far from being unofficial. Voltaire was at least a historiographer royal. But it is misleading to include Chaadaev, Belinsky, and Aksakov in the same category as Kliuchevsky and Miliukov. Section 6 of part 2 is headed "The View from Inside the Empire." Since the authors of six out of seven excerpts under this heading were Germans and the Russian Empire dates from 1721, the student of European history might well ask which empire was meant?

The disjointedness and rigidity of the standard scheme that has been imposed on Professor Oliva as editor have deprived him of the opportunity to acquaint the student with the evidence interpreted in his own introduction and in the well-chosen excerpts from the writings of Kliuchevsky, Miliukov, Pokrovsky, and a living Soviet historian. Here again higher standards of accuracy and taste might have been adhered to. On page 13 the effect of "industrial development" on the peasantry is misrepresented. The peasant was (already) "tied to the land" and (eventually) "sold into slavery," but in the main for other reasons; the conception of the monarch as the first servant of the state (p. 10) owes more to Prussia than to Byzantium; from the bibliographical note on page 178 it will be seen that the clumsy translation of Kliuchevsky used on pages 155–60 has been rendered obsolete by the "excellent" new one of 1963. It is a pity too that Professor Oliva has not followed up his own valuable point about Peter's legacy being "a great deception," which echoes Pokrovsky's passage on "the bankruptcy of Peter's system."

It is hard to tell what the student of Russian history or the general reader will make of this piece of historical stargazing, although one may be certain that they will be puzzled by the bare text and the misleading heading of "A Decree on the Right of Factories to Buy Villages" (p. 51), and even more so by point 5 of the "Decrees on the Duties of the Senate" (p. 47), which reads "To reform letters of exchange and keep these in one place" but means that henceforth the Senate will be responsible for the bills of exchange drawn by the authorities for the benefit of individuals. The translation of this document is not the editor's, who for the most

part relies on published material without reference to the Russian context. These omissions, however, are more likely to annoy the scholar, for whom this book is obviously not intended but who will nevertheless find it useful if inadequate. Finally two errors call for correction: the writer of the letter to Count J. H. Flemming, Baron Manteuffel, was not "advisor to the king in Prussia" (p. 109) but the Saxon envoy accredited to Frederick I; Chaadaev was not declared insane "for his scorn of the Muscovite past" but rather for having decried the Russia of his own day.

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MUBADELE—AN OTTOMAN-RUSSIAN EXCHANGE OF AMBASSADORS. Annotated and translated by *Norman Itzkowitz* and *Max Mote*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970. x, 261 pp. \$11.50.

The simultaneous command of Turkic and Slavic languages is still rare, as desirable as they both are for the historian of Eastern Europe and necessary as a knowledge of Russian is for the Turkologist. Thus in the present volume two specialists have collaborated to publish in translation the dispatches of the Turkish ambassador 'Abd ül-Kerim (1775–76) to Catherine II of Russia and of the Russian ambassador, Prince Nikolai Vasilievich Repnin, to Sultan 'Abd ül-Ĥamid I in the same years. Both had been involved in the conclusion of the peace of Küçük Qainarğa (Küçük Kaynarca) and had had to deal with the sultan, the one about war prisoners, the other about the position of the Crimea vis-à-vis Russia, neither with very striking success.

Of the two diaries the Russian one is more or less a succession of dates and external experiences. It was published by the Russian Academy immediately after it was composed and is rather more an indication of the Russian self-image than an assessment of Turkish relations from the Russian viewpoint. It seems to me that the Turkish report is more informative, referring to many aspects of Russian public and cultural life and recording many interesting observations without seeking in any way to flaunt their worth. The report was not intended for publication and at the time of its composition had to bear the scrutiny of a series of court officials. It was only published in 1898 by Ahmed Ğevdet Paşa, from a version different from the one Itzkowitz uses. The latter compares both texts and refrains from undertaking republication of the Turkish text of Ğevdet Paşa. In the introduction the situation of Turkey in 1768–76 is sketched in some detail, and, following available evidence, the travel routes from both embassies and others of the same period, the supplies with their costs, and the relevant diplomatic customs are described.

Besides an index the work contains a very useful if not complete prosopography with geographical and technical references, as well as an extensive and careful bibliography. The book is a useful contribution to the history of Russo-Turkish relations, which have still been not at all definitively studied, and a testimony of an harmonious and in its way exemplary collaboration of two scholars in a field that is for linguistic reasons especially difficult.

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