

Just one other remark. I have my disagreement with Davis, but he was quite right to remind Rosefelde of the time factor. Massive investment projects begun during 1929–32 would not have been completed in the first plan period even if there had been no bottlenecks or any shortage of skilled manpower. How long does it take to build a big factory? Until a factory is built and becomes operational, it cannot provide a flow of industrial output. Plainly this must be taken into account in assessing the efficacy or inefficacy of the chosen strategy. This is not apologetics; this is simple common sense. Rosefelde quite failed to reply to this point, and it is his duty to do so.

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[Professor Rosefelde has expressed his intention to reply.]

TO THE EDITOR:

Forthright and vigorous criticism of published work is essential to the wellbeing of scholarship, to my way of thinking, but so is civility. On the latter score I deplore Richard Hellie's savage attack on Paul Bushkovitch and his book *The Merchants of Moscow* (*Slavic Review*, 40, no. 2 [Summer 1981]: 280–82). At issue is not only the intemperate and abusive tone of the review, but the wholesale condemnation, the failure to notice the merits of the book and to provide a balanced appraisal. Though Bushkovitch may have been slipshod in his handling of some details — Hellie's review focuses mainly on this type of thing — he deserves credit for venturing to question the received wisdom on his subject, seeking to employ quantification where it has heretofore been notably absent, bringing into play some new archival material and several significant but little-known articles, and attempting to examine the commerce and merchants of Muscovy in a wider, East European perspective. As opposed to Hellie's implication that *The Merchants of Moscow* is worthless and ought not to have been published, I would characterize it as a study that promises more than it delivers, that raises provocative questions but does not often provide fully satisfying answers. This is a work every would-be student of Muscovite commerce and the merchants should read but, as with any work, read critically. The inquisitive student will find gathered here not only a fair amount of data not readily accessible elsewhere but also a good deal of food for thought.

As limitations of space rule out a comprehensive discussion, my further remarks will be confined to what I take to be the serious flaws in Bushkovitch's book. Although Bushkovitch deals informatively with a variety of matters (for a good summary, see Raymond H. Fisher's treatment in the *Russian Review*, 40, no. 2 (April 1981): 181–82), he is primarily concerned with revising what he considers the inadequate prevailing perceptions of the Muscovite merchantry. The first task of a revisionist work, it would seem, is to present a reasonably full, fair, and accurate account of the construction to be revised. But Bushkovitch fulfills this task unsatisfactorily. He speaks of a historiographical tradition that stemmed from N. I. Kostomarov (1817–85), was carried forward by M. V. Dovnar-Zapol'skii (1867–1934), survived the Revolution and reappeared in the interwar publications of S. V. Bakhrushin and K. V. Bazilevich, and has most recently been continued by N. I. Pavlenko and myself. Bushkovitch disposes of the work of each with a summary sentence or two, in which qualifications, nuances, and perceived ambiguities are disregarded, and indiscriminately imputes to the lot such views as the following: The Muscovite merchants were poor, backward, and, by implication, economically and politically ineffectual. They were completely at the mercy of an arbitrary state, whose posture with respect to them was “purely negative” and whose policies constituted the main obstacle to economic development (pp. viii–xi). How can the different conclusions that Bushkovitch draws from his study be truly judged when the historiography against which they are pitted has been faultily represented? For, as I will argue, Bushkovitch illegitimately implies that the “tradition” was flawed at its birth by ideological bias, and he tends to caricature rather than do justice to the work of his predecessors.

Bushkovitch identifies Kostomarov and Dovnar-Zapol'skii as populist historians, men who subscribed to economic theories that denied capitalism a role in Russian history and "left no room for the Russian merchants" (p. xi). This is plainly a misconception. Kostomarov rebelled against a historiographical tradition that concentrated on the state and the summit of society to the neglect of the mass of the people. However, there is no basis for affiliating him with the populist ideology that envisaged for Russia a transition to socialism by a noncapitalist path. Rather than an agrarian socialism, Kostomarov's ideal was a federation of democratically governed Slavic nations, with their religion and national characteristics preserved. A political liberal, Kostomarov drew the fire of radical university students in St. Petersburg during 1861–62 for his refusal to join their protest activities. In addition to these discordances, there is an awkward chronological difficulty. According to N. L. Rubinshtein (*Russkaia istoriografiia* [1941], chap. 23) and others, populist historiography stemmed from writings of Lavrov and Mikhailovskii published in the late 1860s and reached its culmination in the works of V. I. Semevskii in the 1880s. However, the book in which Kostomarov deals with the merchants, *Ocherk torgovli moskovskago gosudarstva v XVI i XVII stoletiiakh*, was published in 1862. Dovnar-Zapol'skii's *Torgovlia i promyshlennost' Moskvy XVI–XVII vv.* appeared in 1910, after populist historiography had made its mark, but Dovnar-Zapol'skii can no more be counted a partisan of that tendency than Kostomarov. In his *Istoriia russkago narodnago khoziaistva* (1911), after examining the work of a number of populist writers (pp. 13–19), Dovnar-Zapol'skii concludes: "it is not difficult to see that populism's orientation (*otno-shenie*) to the economic past provides nothing essential to the understanding of that past."

Bushkovitch's work lays the basis for a series of propositions apparently at odds with the image of the Moscow merchants that he imputes to earlier writers: the alleged weakness of the Russian merchants has been exaggerated, since they succeeded in restricting the foreign merchants to a smallish share of Russia's domestic market. The Muscovite merchants demonstrated energy and initiative in exploiting commercial opportunities that arose with the expansion of Muscovy to the north and east. The commercial competition of the state turns out on closer examination to have been less serious than previously assumed. The chances that a leading merchant family would survive as such over time were not notably inferior to those for similar families in most other European countries. The service obligations imposed on the upper merchants were not necessarily detrimental, for the officeholders enjoyed opportunities to feather their nests at the government's expense. Whatever their inadequacies, the Russian merchants made a better record than their counterparts in other East European countries.

These findings of Bushkovitch may require a modest revision of our image of the Moscow merchants, but it is not easy to specify precisely how. Some of the propositions listed are better supported than others, the last of them being the least persuasive, in my estimation. Some of these findings appear to be novel only in the light of Bushkovitch's simplistic rendering of the work of his predecessors. The entrepreneurial achievements of the upper-level merchants have been recognized not only by such early Soviet writers as Bakhrushin but also by Dovnar-Zapol'skii, who discerned among them "capitalists in the real sense of the word" (*Torgovlia*, p. 88). Earlier writers may sometimes have over-emphasized the negative aspects of state activities vis-à-vis the merchants, but they certainly did not define the state's role as "purely negative." For example, one of my articles listed in Bushkovitch's bibliography indicates some of the ways that their association with the state benefited the merchants: "Their status, offices, and associations made the *gosti* party to inside information, likely beneficiaries when economic plums were being handed out, and occasionally the recipients of unusual understanding and forbearance when they became entangled in financial difficulties" (Samuel H. Baron, *Muscovite Russia: Collected Essays* [London, 1980], chap. 6). My piece on the *gost'* Vasilii Shorin (*Muscovite Russia*, chap. 7) underscores the importance of government favor in the development of his "business empire." The government also served as a source of credit

and, over time, provided Russian merchants with protection against foreign merchants. Parenthetically, this was surely a prime reason for their success in limiting the foreigners' share of the internal market, a point that Bushkovitch ignores. Apropos his assertion that "the merchants may have exploited the state as much as the state exploited the merchants," it is worth noting that the most important piece of evidence he adduces was first put into circulation around seventy years ago by none other than Dovnar-Zapol'skii (*Torgovlia*, pp. 37–40; Bushkovitch, pp. 166, 172, 195). Kostomarov (*Ocherk torgovli*, pp. 1–2) and I (*Muscovite Russia*, chaps. 2 and 5) envisaged the backwardness of the Muscovite merchantry as a consequence of a complex of geographical and premodern historical circumstances, not merely as a result of the state's negative role in the Muscovite era.

If his rendering of the tradition is misleading, Bushkovitch also neglects to address a number of points that militate against his case. He has shown — some will deem his evidence more suggestive than conclusive — that state competition with merchant commerce was less weighty than supposed. But he tends to ignore abundant evidence of government arbitrariness, exemplified most strikingly by the frequent incidence of state confiscation of the property of leading merchant families. His study pays little attention to the wider context, as if it did not matter that Muscovy was a polity with pronounced autocratic tendencies and patrimonial characteristics, a society composed mainly of state-servitor landholders and a peasantry undergoing enserfment, with an economy largely natural and self-sufficient. Bushkovitch has increased our awareness of the achievements of the Muscovite merchants while understating the impediments to private commercial activity, just as earlier writers may have overemphasized the impediments while underestimating relatively their attainments. But the temporal scope of his study is too restricted, and he makes no effort to link his findings with the longer sweep of Russian history. Had he done so, he might have been compelled to ask why the Russian commercial and industrial class was comparatively so weak in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He might then have been obliged to acknowledge that the disadvantageous geographical and historical background and the unfavorable environment of both the Muscovite and post-Muscovite eras were ultimately decisive, that the achievements of the Moscow merchants, worthy of recognition though they are, ought not to be overestimated.

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Professor Bushkovitch Replies:

Richard Hellie's review of my book speaks for itself and deserves no reply. The very patient reader will best judge its character by comparing his comments with the text it discusses.

Samuel Baron, on the other hand, has performed the service of raising some of the real issues involved in the discussion. It is curious that a book chiefly concerned with economic history has produced the most controversy over my views of the role of the state to which I devote sixteen pages (chapter nine). This controversy, however, reflects the interests and views of the majority of my colleagues, who are primarily concerned with the political and administrative history of Russia in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Baron apparently reproaches me for not fully endorsing the conception that the Muscovite state possessed overwhelming power over "society." Continued insistence on this proposition does not make it true: the burden of proof is not on me but on those who assert it. I personally do not believe that research will turn up a liberal state bound by law or even an autocracy rendered tolerable by mere inefficiency. I do believe, however, that lack of research has led historians to describe the state of that era in excessively modern