Much has been written about the interaction between Tsar Peter I and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, especially about the philosopher’s influence on the ruler.1 Even today one can participate in the enthusiasm that characterized their exchange of ideas and information; after two hundred years, the breath of their curiosity and the intensity of their vitality is still catching. Indeed, the spectrum of their concerns was so varied that it touched upon practically every aspect of life. But while some areas of their interaction have already been discussed in great detail, particularly Leibniz’s interest in the East, his recommendations for Peter’s collegial system are not well known.2 It is especially unclear to what extent the German helped determine the conceptualization and establishment of the colleges, the kollegii, the main central bu-


Reauctric organ of the Petrine administration. All too often ideological and nationalistic interests have obscured and interfered with an accurate telling of his role.³

Before entering any discussion about the influence of the Aufklärer on the tsar, one should be aware of the basic meaning, importance, and function of the colleges. When Peter began to restructure Russia's central domestic administration, he found a multitude of overlapping jurisdictions (that is, more than forty separate ofcices),⁴ which he tried to reorder into systematic coherence by imposing a new set of institutions. to wit, the senate, the colleges and the procuracy. He wanted to give the Russian state a coherent administration that would report on activities of the central and territorial jurisdictions and that would receive, and then properly pass on, the orders of the tsar.⁵

The reason for establishing the senate—to deal first with the central coordinating and supervisory body—was thus to create an agency that could head the embryonic bureaucracy and undermine the basis of the existing agencies and lines of interest and communication. In actual practice, the senate first acted as a cabinet and a high court. When Peter then supplemented its executive potential with the colleges, he enabled it to develop into his top administrative body, the precursor of the later ministries.⁶

As initially conceived, the colleges were thus an integral part of the "senatorial" government (Ruling Senate—Pravitel'stvuushchii Senat) of the period between 1711 and 1775-85, possibly even 1802. In large part the first systematic domestic administration formed around the colleges because Peter added

---

³. German authors tend to attribute a greater degree of foreign influence than their Russian counterparts.
⁴. See, for example, N. P. Eroshkin, Istoriiia gosudarstvennykh uchrezhdений dorevoli-
   uционной России (Moscow: "Vyshaia shkola," 1968), chart for the pre-Petrine period.
⁵. About the reforms as a whole, refer to E. Amburger, Geschichte der Behördenor-
   ganisation Russlands von Peter dem Grossen bis 1917 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), pp. 6-
   15; M. M. Bogoslovskii, Petr Velikii i ego reforma (Moscow: "Koooperativnoe izdatel's-
   tvoy," 1920), especially pp. 98 ff; N. F. Demidova, "Burokratizatsiya gosudarstvennogo ap-
   parata absolutizma v XVII-XVIII vv.," in Absolutizm v Rossi i (XVII-XVIII vv.) (Moscow: 
   Nauka, 1964), pp. 223-30; Iurii V. Got'ë, Istoriia Oblastnago Upravleniia v Rossi i ot Petra 
   I do Ekateriny II, 2 vols. (Moscow: G. Lissner and D. Sobko, 1913), I, 36 ff; Marc Rafeff, 
   Imperial Russia, 1682-1825: The Coming of Age of Modern Russia (New York: A. A. 
   Knopf., 1971), especially p. 73; "The Russian Autocracy and Its Officials," Harvard Slavic 
   Studies, 4 (Cambridge. Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1957), especially 77-91; R. Wittram, 
   Peter I. Czar und Kaiser, 2 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 1964), especial-
   ly II, 112 ff; and George L. Yaney, The Systematization of Russian Government: Social 
   Evolution in the Domestic Administration of Imperial Russia, 1711-1905 (Champaign-
⁶. From 1715 to 1721, Peter created twelve colleges: see Eroshkin, Istoriiia, p. 87. The 
   long-range impact of the introduction of the colleges as the arm of the Senate is discussed 
   in the works already cited. It may be useful to add here Sergei M. Troitskii, Russkii ab-
   solutizm i dvorians'tvo XVIII v. (Moscow: Nauka, 1974), p. 42 ff, and to note Mark Rafeff's 
   change of opinion about the dating of the impact of the reforms from his earlier "Russian Autocracy" to his later Imperial Russia.