For those accustomed to a more traditional approach to the study of Russian law, it may seem that he is standing on the outside looking in, rather than beginning with the Russian legal documentation and moving outward. The fact is, of course, that he has done a very careful job of sifting the Russian evidence; furthermore, he gives no indication of forcing it to fit some preconceived model far removed from medieval Russian realities. Soviet historians in particular—although clearly the best of the current generation might be excepted—will certainly find it hard to swallow some of Kaiser's generalizations on the nature of Russian social development, especially since he offers most of them as unproven assertions rather than documented fact. In my view though, the beauty of his book lies precisely in this willingness to eschew the traditional plodding approach that makes so much of Russian legal and social history undigestible. Whether he is right is another matter—I personally find most of his arguments persuasive. I only hope that he will provide us with an equally bold social history of Medieval Russia to complement this volume.

Daniel Clarke Waugh


Professor Baron observes in his Preface that thirteen of the fourteen articles reprinted in this volume appeared in a ten-year period (1969-79). The one exception, his analysis of Plekhanov's view of Russia as an "oriental society," however, lies at the core of his subsequent research on Russian towns and economic history, and on related Soviet historiography. The affinity of Baron's and Plekhanov's views is not, one suspects, accidental.

Despite this substantive unity of the articles collected here, Baron notes that finding a way to organize them in this volume posed problems. Since Baron's research moved backwards from the seventeenth to the sixteenth century, reprinting the articles in the sequence of their publication would have violated historical chronology, and therefore Baron chose not to arrange them that way. Instead he has employed three groupings, which he admits are somewhat arbitrary: Essays in Economic and Social History, Historiography and Sources, and Russia and the West. While I sympathize with Baron's dilemma, nevertheless I would still have preferred a straight chronological sequence by publication, since any thematic division is too fluid to be useful and since such a sequence would have made more obvious to the reader the evolution he alludes to in his Preface of his appreciation of the Muscovite merchants.

"A Guide to Published and Unpublished Documents on Anglo-Russian Relations in the Sixteenth Century in British Archives" (XI), although obviously part of Baron's research on Muscovite history, might better have been excluded from this volume. It is very valuable but only to future researchers on this topic, whereas all the other essays are suitable for a much more general audience. In its stead it would have been most appropriate to include his essay, "Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship in Sixteenth-Seventeenth Century Russia," prepared for the Conference on Entrepreneurship and Economic Innovation in Russia/Soviet Union at the Kennan Institute in November, 1978. This essay is a synthesis of the research presented in the articles in this volume and, one hopes, will see the light of day in a volume of articles from that Conference.

Following the Variorum format, the articles are photographed with the original pagination and supplied with Roman numerals (cited here) to indicate location in the book. This mixture of type-faces is, as ever, distracting and hardly aesthetic, but the quality of reproduction is good. A comprehensive ten-page index of personal and place-names, institutions, and (a very few) concepts is quite helpful for cross-referencing.

Baron has made effective use of a limited amount of archival research in one Soviet
archive on the seventeenth century and in several English repositories for the sixteenth. His review and historiographic articles demonstrate a sensitive appreciation of the diversity within Soviet scholarship, although like most Western historians he is quick to laud as "progress" evidence of Soviet acceptance of interpretations present in Western (and Imperial Russian) scholarship. The articles are sprightly written, and sometimes, e.g., the story of Vasilii Shorin's career (VII), dramatic. Whenever Baron resorts to speculation, he is frank in explaining his logic. I found the guesswork as to why Peter the Great dispensed with the gosti excessive but the psychological approach to Krizhanich imaginative and stimulating. It hardly needs to be said that these are publications of sound and serious scholarship.

I would take issue with several points tertiary to Baron's main argument. He regurgitates the typical one-sided characterization of the consequences of the Mongol conquest for the history of Russian cities, commerce, and contacts with the West (II, 236; XIV, 183). Although he is properly amazed to see the widow of a gosti performing his governmental functions, he would not have been surprised at her running the business (VI, 35; VIII, 492); research in progress will establish that women played a much more active and independent role in the economy. Finally, I found Baron's analysis of the inverse relationship between religious philanthropy and extreme piety, on the one hand, and capitalistic accumulation, on the other (VI, 36; VII, 508) historically naive.

But the core of the articles is Baron's well-known overall conclusion. He writes: "As we know, a significant capitalism failed to develop in Russia before the last half of the nineteenth century. It would be difficult to cite any other single factor, positive or negative, that has more deeply affected modern Russian history." (II, 323) Capitalism failed to develop in early modern Russia because of the inhibiting role of the state and the tsar as entrepreneur; because the state created, exploited, and then discarded the gosti, its most talented and energetic entrepreneurs; and because insecurity of property and social disorder created discontinuity among merchant families and prevented their evolution into an influential bourgeoisie. In short, a host of conditions fostered Russian economic backwardness. Even Baron's growing admiration for the achievements of the Muscovite merchants has made no dent in his conception that what needs to be explained is "the failure of capitalist development in early modern Russia." Baron agrees with Plekhanov that "certain aspects of the life of Russia seem more intelligible when viewed historically as those of a fundamentally non-Western civilization" (XIII, 403), and that the contrast between Russian and West European history has been dominant.

This is not the place to dispute this paradigm, which I do not happen to share. It seems to me that Baron reaches his most favorable evaluations of the Muscovite merchants and Russian economic development when he is most critical of his sources, e.g., Fletcher. I continue to think it is something of a double-standard to interpret the desire of Muscovite merchants for monopoly as a reflection of their inferiority, inability to compete, and backwardness, but to consider the machinations of foreign merchants to avoid competing with these Muscovite merchants as evidence of their capitalistic dynamism and superiority. Those seeking a different conceptual model of Muscovite merchants and early modern Russian economic history should turn to Paul Bushkovitch's brilliant new monograph for enlightenment.

But whether one agrees with Professor Baron's conclusions or not, there is no question that it is profitable to read, and re-read, the articles in Muscovite Russia. Baron deserves much of the credit for initiating the revival of interest in Muscovite merchants and economic history which has broadened and enriched our understanding of Russian history.

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