He also takes note of Boris’ genuine but largely ineffectual attempts to forestall mass starvation during the famine of 1601-02.

The portrait of Boris which emerges from Skrynnikov’s study is that of a consummate politician who achieved power against great odds and who acted in concert with the dictates of his times. To achieve his ends Boris was capable of deserting his allies and carrying out energetic reprisals against his enemies. However, it was not until the end of Boris’ life that his machinations against his foes took on anything even approaching the ferocity of those carried out by Ivan IV.

Skrynnikov argues that Boris’ fall was due to opposition not from the aristocracy but from the lower orders, brought on by the oppression of the servile system and exacerbated by the famine of 1601-02. Fearing a mass rising, Boris reinstated the right of peasant departure in 1601. Gentry opposition to this measure led Boris to annul it two years later, which produced the volatile situation on the eve of Boris’ death wherein the lower orders began to shift their support to the first False Dmitrii.

Skrynnikov’s contribution to the study of Boris’ life can best be seen in four key chapters on: Boris’ role in the establishment of serfdom, his election as tsar by what Skrynnikov considers a lawfully constituted and representative Assembly of the Land, the Uglichen affair, and the early career of the first False Dmitrii. These chapters clearly demonstrate Skrynnikov’s expertise in dealing with the sources (many of them as yet unpublished). While he does not answer every question one might have either on these sources or on the historiography of the points at issue, Skrynnikov’s conclusion in these chapters ought to be taken seriously, if not accepted unreservedly. Moreover, it can be said that the cases Skrynnikov makes for Boris’ innocence in Dmitrii’s death and for the identification of the Pretender with Grigorii Otrepev ought to convince any skeptics who might remain.

The book reproduces Skrynnikov’s notes, with additional editorial notes by Professor Graham (although not as many as a non-specialist might require), who has also written an introductory chapter which provides useful historiographic background on Boris. The translation is readable and, on the whole, accurate, although one minor slip might be noted: on pp. 140-41 (cf. p. 169 of the Russian edition), “Basil the Great” (Vasilii Velikii) is twice rendered as “Mighty Vasilii.”

Nancy Yanoshak


There is a universal agreement on the value of Solov’ev’s *History* which is summed up in Paul Horecky’s annotated bibliography of *Basic Russian Publications* (1962): “All in all, the fullest and most important and influential history of Russia ever written; much of it still not superseded.” Likewise, everyone knows, and marvels at, the manner of its initial appearance in the nineteenth century: “Solov’ev set out to rewrite history, and in 1851 the first volume of his famous *History of Russia from Earliest Times* appeared. In the next twenty-eight years there followed volume after volume, twenty-nine altogether, ending with the date 1774” (Anatole G. Mazour, *Modern Russian Historiography* [1958], p. 101). In the Soviet period, Solov’ev’s *History* was reissued.
between 1959 and 1966, with some new annotations, in fifteen hefty volumes, and a tirazh of almost 50,000 copies. And now the Academic International Press has begun to publish a translated, unabridged, text in a projected fifty volumes. With but three volumes from the early-modern period in hand, I will not undertake a review of Solov'ev's majestic work, but only of the English translation. I begin with the assumption that Solov'ev's importance requires little further comment and thus deal exclusively with the form of the new edition.

A translation has one purpose: to provide access to a text to those who do not possess the language of the original. In the field of Russian history, and particularly in the case of Solov'ev's multi-volumed History, presumably the audience is the college student, and this is why the publisher passionately urges faculty members to “make certain that their libraries have subscriptions.” The fundamental question for this review is, therefore, just how useful is this edition to the English-reading student? Should the Russian-reading college professor refer the eager student to Solov'ev in translation, and what is likely to happen if he does so?

The best reason to send that hypothetical student to Solov'ev is to be found in the very nature of his work. Even the prolific Sergei Solov'ev could not have written punctually a chronologically sequential volume a year for twenty-nine years if in fact he had to write all of the twenty-nine volumes himself. He compiled that remarkable record by allowing others to do the bulk of his work, that is, by including an enormous volume of source materials. Indeed, to make available those sources is the best justification for translating Solov'ev, since they quantitatively and qualitatively outweigh all other editions of translated source materials put together: Dmytryshyn, Raeff, Dukes, Vernadsky, et al. Furthermore, consistent with Solov'ev's pursuit of the “national physiognomy” of the Russian people, they take the student into the fantastic realm of everyday life and conflict, and of fundamental human relationships among ordinary and extraordinary Russians. The work bristles with the basic documentation of letter, memoir, law, chronicle, speech, and account book, which provide the anecdote and substance of all history. When one opens the volume on Peter's Great Reforms, for example, one discovers that Solov'ev himself wrote only nineteen of the thirty-three lines on page one; seven of the forty-two lines on page two, sixteen on page three, and only four on page four. All of the rest, the vast bulk of the text, is directly quoted source material. What an unparalleled gold mine for the English-reading student! These figures explain how Solov'ev was able to maintain his schedule; they underline the significance of the translation, and they imply the ultimate question for this review: how usable are these translated sources?

Unfortunately, the first answer is, only moderately usable. For the English-reading student, clearly the editors have made a wise decision in deleting both Solov'ev's Russian-language footnotes and the Soviet annotation to them. But sometimes the bibliographical omissions go too far. I would have retained in the English notes all references to the Western travellers whom Solov'ev used so often and effectively, for many have been reprinted and are available in the good college library. This is a personal preference. More serious, however, is the omission of the references to sources in Russian not identified by Solov'ev in the text itself. If I told a student, for example, to read Solov'ev on post-Petrine education, and he found one short section entitled “Education” in Volume 35, he would discover about eighty lines of text, of which Solov'ev wrote about ten. The bulk of the section consists of two lengthy quotations from memoirs of school days; they are, however, unidentified by the author, and thus the student is denied vital information, and cannot use the accepted footnote form, “Memoirs of Danilev and Bolotov, cited by Solov'ev, Vol. 35, pp. 126-28.” Numerous such examples could be given from all the volumes under review, and they seriously reduce the utility of the sources for the student.