at the same time emphasizing some of the minor but still significant nuances of social behavior which were used down to the Great War as a means of maintaining social distance. The Moscow business elite had within it considerable social divisions in which such behavioral traits played a part. These are often touched upon in the ensuing chapters which describe first the economic and social background to the Moscow kupechestvo and then the contrasts between the older generation (chapters 3 and 4) and their progeny (chapters 5 and 6).

No doubt many will find points of disagreement with Ruckman's interpretation. It is after all based entirely on published materials and thereby reflects most clearly the history of those families that left a legacy of memoir literature. How accurate are these memoirs upon which Ruckman depends so much? How representative are they of the larger group she is attempting to describe? Indeed, how impervious was the Moscow business elite to upward social and economic mobility? This facet of this particular social group does not come across especially clearly. Much has been made by others, including Owen, about the importance of the participation in city government by the Moscow business elite. Ruckman is not so persuaded, but offers remarkably little by way of assessment of the policies and practice of municipal government despite the availability of a substantial primary and secondary literature. What is often lacking in the Ruckman account is some comparative framework against which the achievements or otherwise of the Moscow Duma and its merchant membership might be set. This is after all not an unimportant issue since much of the participation in public life of the Moscow business elite ostensibly centred on the Duma. There is perhaps good reason to conclude such a study with 1905. Certainly there is precedent. But given the absence of a concluding chapter in which the main strands of the argument are woven into a more coherent pattern, the book ends more with a whimper than a bang. It is a pity, for Ruckman has done much more than simply add some grist for this particular mill. The study is insightful, is much enlivened with copious quotation and offers some scope for generating discussion on points of general significance for historians of later imperial Russia. It deserves a wide readership.

James H. Bater


By nobility, Hamburg means only landholders who were hereditary nobles. He is not interested in government administrators or army officers, no matter how high their rank or ancient their lineage, nor does he care about people aspiring to become nobles. Needless to say, he does not take German nobles, Polish nobles, or Georgian nobles into account.

Hamburg also defines politics narrowly. As he sees it, the term includes only words and actions intended to express and serve the collective interests and beliefs of a group of people. It does not include attempts by individuals or groups to gain political or economic ends by persuading some high official to support them. Hamburg recognizes that Russian nobles did in fact operate this way, and he seems to approve of this "deferential politics" in earlier times, i.e., before 1861. In the period after 1881, however, Hamburg does not consider the manipulation of persons to be "real" politics.

Hamburg's definitions enable him to assert that the Russian nobility made almost no effort to act or think politically during the period from 1881 to 1905. The few moves some of them did make were not effective, and they only served to illustrate the nobles' collective impotence. After the peasant riots of 1902, the nobles began to stir, and by
1905 many of them were becoming political in accordance with Hamburg's definition. To do this, however, they had to join groups and take up causes that were essentially non-noble and even hostile to the concept of nobility. These considerations lead Hamburg to conclude that the nobility were not a class. Hamburg has almost nothing to say about 1905, so the end of his story is not altogether clear, but I gather that in his view the nobility never did become a class.

Hamburg describes several of the nobles' pathetic efforts to act politically. From 1878 to 1881 there was a move afoot to introduce a consultative assembly into the government's decision making; Alexander III squelched it, and it stopped. From 1881 on, the fall in grain prices (Hamburg labels this phenomenon "the Great Depression") caused noblemen to seek government aid in various ways: low-interest loans on their land, preferential freight rates for their grain (Hamburg calls these "differential tariffs"), and the protection of their estates by entail. Actually, the noblemen did get low-interest loans and a law on entail, but, says Hamburg, these successes were illusory. The government only gave the nobles what it wished to give them and no more. In the 1890s some noblemen went beyond begging for relief. They voiced opposition to the government's economic policies, chiefly Witte's industrializing measures. This, says Hamburg, made no significant impact.

Hamburg denies that the nobility were "decaying." What they were doing, he says, was "fragmenting." Individual noblemen were active and even effective; some of them turned against autocracy and joined the movement for "liberation" (a word that turns up without definition in chapter 9). One gathers that Hamburg approves of this new vitality, but of course it only led to frustration and failure. Was this because a strong autocracy crushed the nobles? No, says Hamburg. autocracy rested on the Russian nobility; as they fragmented, it disintegrated. I think this is what he is saying.

The book ends with a short exercise in comparative history. We are told that American populists and German junkers were different from Russian nobles because, unlike the Russians, they could act politically. French nobles in the 1780s were similar to Russian nobles in the 1900s because, like the Russians, they were fragmenting, hence unable to act as a class.

On the face of it, a book claiming that the Russian nobility played no significant role in politics during the last decades of the tsarist regime represents an astounding innovation. As I finish my reading, however, I find myself weary, not astounded. Hamburg seems to be disagreeing with something, but he never tells us what it is. When he rejects "class analysis," he implies that he has some other analysis in mind, but he does not say what it is. In fact, he is not escaping the essential banality of class analysis, for his point is that the Russian nobility perished (fragmented) precisely because it failed to be a class. If you cannot be a class (in Hamburg's world) you cannot be anything. Thus, after a bold start, Hamburg returns to the solid ground of conventional historiography. He measures Russia against Western standards and tries to decide whether or not she met them. He decides at length that she is guilty of not meeting them. His brief comparisons with Germans, French, and Americans are invidious (to use Von Laue's term), not enlightening. Comparison is a good thing when one uses it to gain a new perspective, but Hamburg is only seeking illustrations for his preconceptions.

Perhaps it is Hamburg's zeal to portray the nobility's failings that leads him to refer to a time of rapidly increasing agricultural production and rural prosperity, to say nothing of massive industrial expansion, as the "Great Depression." Perhaps it is this same zeal that leads him to slur over real events and concentrate his attention on the public statements of agitators and journalists. Take, for example, his discussion of the noble land bank. Following the Soviet quasi-scholar, Iu. B. Solov'ev, Hamburg never troubles to describe the bank's organization or the formal principles underlying its operation (though he could easily have done so by reading a mere six pages in the Tretie Polnoe