

IVAN THE TERRIBLE. By *Robert Payne* and *Nikita Romanoff*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975. x, 502 pp. Illus. \$12.95.

There have been many popular biographies of Ivan IV, but this one is easily the best. It makes good reading. The text is based upon a wide range of contemporary narrative sources and is accompanied by well-chosen illustrations, maps, plans of the Kremlin, a glossary, and an index. The bibliography includes all the major works in Russian, English, and German, along with some esoterica.

The book concentrates on military campaigns, diplomatic negotiations, and the horrors of the *oprichnina*. There is next to nothing on administrative reforms, and only one paragraph on the peasantry. But the authors did not set out to write a history of the Muscovite state in the sixteenth century. They have given us an account of Ivan's life, which they divide into three sharply contrasting periods: the troubled adolescent, the good tsar (guided by Sylvester), and the "harsh and tyrannical voluptuary" (following Anastasia's death). Allowing for some hyperbole (Ivan becomes "almost an abstraction of pure evil"), this is a respectable view: it goes back at least to Karamzin if not to Kurbskii.

And yet the Ivan that emerges is an Ivan that never existed. It is not a matter of factual misstatements; there are some errors but they are not ruinous. The authors have failed by following their sources all too well. There is no attempt to assess the reliability of the sources, no awareness of historiographical problems. Thus we are told about the Chosen Council, or about "Ivan's vast private library of manuscripts," without any hint that their existence is at best dubious. Foreign accounts are taken at face value; the most improbable anecdotes are repeated, even in the face of warnings issued by the editors of the texts cited. The conventional pieties of Muscovite chronicles are taken for stenographic reports. One example must suffice. The Nikon Chronicle contains a long and rhetorical farewell address which Ivan allegedly delivered to his wife in his chambers on the eve of his departure for the Kazan' campaign in 1552. The authors give it to us word for word as a precise record of the tsar's actions and feelings, apparently never stopping to consider how improbable it is that the speech was ever made, let alone that someone was standing by taking notes.

Platonov once remarked that "a biography of Ivan the Terrible cannot be written, for we know extraordinarily little of the man himself." It is an admonition still worth heeding.

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GORODSKIE VOSSTANIIA V ROSSII V PERVOI POLOVINE XVII VEKA (30-40-E GODY). By *E. V. Chistiakova*. Voronezh: Izdatel'stvo Voronezhskogo universiteta, 1975. 243 pp. 90 kopecks.

This small volume is an important reevaluation of the central role of violence in the development of Muscovite social and political life during the middle of the seventeenth century. The author focuses on the context and development of the events commonly called "urban uprisings" during the 1630s and 1640s, ending with the uprisings in Moscow and other towns during the summer of 1648. The period chosen for this study is a good one, emphasizing the continuity in the violence and in the groups which participated. On the other hand, the traditional