

tried to recruit Scots officers in the Russian army and arrange for them to land in northeast Scotland to restore James II to the throne.

Collaborative histories are sometimes hard to pull off, but this one is very successful, seamless, and logically organized. The three authors this project brought together are the unquestioned leading experts in their respective fields. Stuart-Romanov military relations and the story of British volunteers in Russian service is treated by Herd, who is already known for his work editing and annotating the memoirs of Patrick Gordon. Kotilaine deals with Anglo-Russian trade and investment relations, as he is the leading expert on Baltic as well as White Sea trade in the seventeenth century. And Dukes, who has long been acknowledged as the pioneer in integrating Russian into general northern European history, takes on the task of discussing diplomatic relations and the political and geopolitical interests and power trajectories of Britain and Muscovy.

The authors make extensive use of materials from British, Russian, Scottish, Dutch, Estonian, and Swedish archives as well as published primary sources, making this book valuable to specialists. The book's engaging style and clearly organized argument would also make it a good text to assign in college and graduate courses on Russian, British, and early modern European history.

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Mestnoe upravlenie v poreformennoi Rossii: Mekhanizmy vlasti i ikh effektivnost' : Svodnye materialy zaochnoi diskussii. Ed. Iu. P. Anshakov, A. E. Zagrebin, S. V. Liubichankovskii. Ekaterinburg-Izhevsk: Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk (RAN), Udmurtskii institut istorii, iazyka i literatury UrO RAN, and Povolzhskii filial Instituta Rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 2010. 496 pp. Notes. Paper.

The ideas in this remarkable book originated in 2009 as an online discussion and appraisal of the effectiveness of imperial Russian provincial administration in the postreform era. They deserve publication because they dramatically reconfigure the study of imperial provincial administration and perhaps even the study of the imperial political system as a whole.

The effort is international. The thirty-seven discussants come from Russia (preponderantly but not exclusively scholars with affiliations in the Volga-Ural region), western Europe, Japan, Canada, and the United States. The organizing committee posed fifteen questions for the discussants, eliciting the 177 responses printed here (*a mozgovyi shturm* [4] as one of the editors put it), some being as short as 2 or 3 lines, others as long as 8 or 10 pages, complete with scholarly apparatus.

The space permitted for this review allows me to pursue some of the themes in the discussion. Those interested in narrower or other specific themes will need to consult the book, though the lack of a subject index is a hindrance. Not all of the fifteen questions were equally provocative. The questions that elicited the greatest number of responses from discussants pertained to the methodology of defining effectiveness, the impact on effectiveness of the sociocultural image of the provincial authorities, the leaders of provincial administrations and the effectiveness of their mechanisms of power, the level of effectiveness resulting from the relationships between the central provincial offices and zemstvo, city, and estate (noble) organs, and differing levels or kinds of effectiveness resulting from variations in regional managerial styles (such as Central Asia and the middle Volga). In virtually every case the discussants support their notions with specific examples from their research, though sometimes the discussants are more interested in bringing forward their archival discoveries than in making links between their findings and the larger issue of effectiveness. At this time the specificity of the discoveries limits one's ability to construct systemic statements from them. These shortcomings, of course, are natural at the beginning stage of any new project.

One thing becomes clear: administrative effectiveness at any site is the product of the confluence of several vectors, including education of the staff; personality and style of

the staff and the governor; the sociocultural level of the province's inhabitants; relations between the provincial center and other centers of power, both above and below them; the speed at which a decision can be made and executed; the adequacy of current laws as an effective guide; the level of corruption; the correspondence between the result of the decision and its costs, goals, and values. Beyond this agreement about omnipresent complexity, however, there are few others. Discussants affirm, or minimize, the effect of the provincial bureaucracy's *soslovie*, mentality, and professionalization on their effectiveness. They disagree about the impact of regional leaders' managerial style, the influence of local specialists on effectiveness, the effect of the size of the provincial bureaucracy, and the optimality of a vertical power structure model for Russian conditions. In lengthy sections they divide over the importance to effectiveness of relations between the central provincial authorities and zemstvo, city, and noble organs of self-administration. Hard lines, however, sometimes erode when discussants continue the conversation, such as when the competing views on relations between these two levels in the province are subdivided into "confrontation" (subdivided further into "harsh" and "mild") or "a dialogue."

Initiating this approach to the study of the Russian administrative system presents us with new challenges and research opportunities. Among the most striking opportunities in their potential are: the middle Volga region as an "inner periphery," versus Turkestan and the Caucasus as "outer peripheries"; the effectiveness and interconnections between the provincial center and, on the one hand, the zemstvo, city, and noble organs of self-administration, and, on the other, St. Petersburg—that is, the provincial center's "forward" and "backward" linkages; an investigation of the provincial "technologies of administration," including the "writing technology," and their effectiveness; collegiality and its effect on decision making; and the complexity of the network of vectors influencing the development and overall structure of the empire.

The publication of this online discussion raises the quality of analysis of provincial administration to a new level. Evaluating the effectiveness of imperial Russian provincial administration has become a distinct and promising scholarly enterprise.

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Tales of Imperial Russia: The Life and Times of Sergei Witte, 1849–1915. By Francis W. Wcislo. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. xvi, 308 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Map. \$65.00, hard bound.

The strengths of this biography chronicling the life of "the most farsighted statesman of the late empire" (245) are several. As a study not only of the life but also of the times of Sergei Witte, the five chapters succeed in contextualizing his boyhood and maturation; his meteoric rise to minister of finance at the age of forty; his sixteen years as "one of the most powerful men in the Russian Empire" (139); and his equally dramatic fall from grace in April 1906.

The author provides the best insight of any of Witte's many biographers into him as a private man and not just as a public figure; indeed, roughly one-third of the pages are given to his formative years, before he held government office. Especially fascinating is the cast of characters in his childhood: a pan-Slavist uncle, Rostislav Fadeev, who nurtured his nephew's intellect and imagination—and left his memoirs as an invaluable source; a passel of female cousins who were writers and intellectuals; a grandmother who figured as a noted naturalist with her own "museum"; and Helena Blavatsky, the internationally renowned spiritualist who held séances at his grandparents' home. Witte emerged from all these influences as a strict monarchist, a firm believer in Russian Orthodoxy (although he married two divorcées), and dedicated to "a lifetime of duty and service" (24) as well as expert knowledge. Interestingly, even though Witte seemed the embodiment of the Petrine ideal of service, he chose to identify himself not with his bureaucrat father but with his mother, who came from one of Russia's most illustrious clans, the Dolgorukiis. Francis W. Wcislo also stresses that Witte's commitment to an imperial vision of Russia