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Corporate state and vertical relationships

Questions implicites dans l'essai de Michael Confino : État corporatif et verticalité des relations

David L. Ransel

- 1 We owe a debt to Michael Confino for his willingness to raise thorny intellectual issues. While members of our craft often set problems of framing aside and simply place our stories on the stage we are given, Confino asked us to think about how the stage was constructed. He wanted us to examine our presuppositions and to guard against uncritical acceptance of established conceptual categories and perspectives. Now again in his essay "The *Soslovie* (Estate) Paradigm," he vigorously interrogated the meaning of this widely accepted term for defining social groups in Imperial Russia. What remained after Confino's analysis was not pretty. In his judgment, *soslovie* had no meaning in regard to peasants and served merely to disguise the truly meaningful pre-existing institutions of peasant life. The *soslovie* concept likewise turned out not to be helpful in understanding most other groups in Russian society. It was either too freely employed as an identifier for city dwellers, yielding at least four urban commercial estates, plus all manner of professions – the learned estate, medical estate, administrative estate – or it was not applied at all to one of the fastest growing social groups, the "people of various ranks." In the one case where it might have made sense, the Russian nobility, which, along with the clergy, was the closest thing Russia had to an ascriptive group, Confino questioned the usefulness of a category that covered people of vastly differing degrees of wealth, dignity, and status. Indeed, borrowing from the work of Roland Mousnier and of François Bluche and Jean-François Solnon, Confino even dismissed the utility of the concept of estate for analyzing French and other European societies. If the notion of estates in European history lacked explanatory value because it lumped together many disparate groups and obscured their influence on events, how would the importation of such an imprecise classification help to explain the development of the rather different Russian society?

- 2 At the end Confino threw up his hands and wondered if we might not simply have to accept *soslovie* because of its established position in the literature. Here he seemed especially influenced by Vasilii Kliuchevskii's use of the term to stand for a "social category." Because Kliuchevskii was known to be precise in his language, Confino argued, his usage must have been common at the time he was writing. Confino therefore concluded that we might as well retain the term *soslovie* as a convenience, while understanding its limitations – at least until a better solution comes along.
- 3 Confino's thoughtful essay raises a number of questions explicitly but even more interestingly implicitly. I would like to focus on the implicit questions.
- 4 The first of these was to ask "whither Russia?" Was Russia developing somewhat belatedly into a society of estates on the presumed European model and then into a society of classes, again on the presumed European model, as most scholars cited by Confino asserted? Or was Russia's development, though following these general lines, compromised by a failure of Russian social estates and classes to replicate faithfully the European examples and therefore to lack internal cohesion and a consequent ability to resist obliteration by the state? Confino explicitly affirmed the existence of society in Russia and rejected the idea that social groups were "alienated from each other, fragmented, and isolated," and he dismissed as hollow the shibboleth of a "divorce between state and society."²
- 5 Although it is hard to disagree with any of these positions, Confino seemed nevertheless to be sufficiently captive of the estates to class paradigm that he did not consider another model of Russia's development that may have more explanatory power, namely, that Russia was developing into a corporate state. Was this not where Russia ended up in the Soviet period when huge ministries, industries, educational facilities, "voluntary" and other organizations were aligned with state objectives by party managers, and when a large part of the population's wages, housing, personal identity, job or educational opportunities, and scarce household and food items were acquired through one's place of employment? Now again, after a decade or so of no consciously articulated social and economic system,³ Russia seems headed back to a corporatist state structure. At least this is how some of both the critics and supporters of the Putin regime are describing its arrangements. Andrei Illarionov, a former economic adviser to Putin who turned critic of the regime, announced at the end of 2005 that the "process of this state evolving into a new corporatist (sic) model reached its completion in 2005. Quantitative changes have evolved into qualitative ones." Illarionov went on to say that the "strengthening of the corporatist state model and setting up favorable conditions for quasi-state monopolies by the state itself hurt the economy. [...] Cabinet members or key Presidential Staff executives chairing corporation boards or serving on those boards are the order of the day in Russia. In what Western country – except in the corporatist state that lasted for 20 years in Italy – is such a phenomenon possible? Which, actually, proves that the term *corporatist* properly applies to Russia today."⁴ An importantly placed defender of the regime likewise defined Russia as a developing corporate state, and, in contrast to Illarionov, assessed this trend in a positive light. In an article in the leading Russian business newspaper, *Kommersant*, Viktor Cherkosov, head of the Russian Drug Enforcement Administration, claimed that the only development scenario for Russia that is both realistic and relatively favorable is continued evolution into a corporatist state ruled by security service officials.⁵

- 6 This outcome should not be surprising. Movement to corporatism began in the imperial period, most visibly in the military and in large government ministries and other offices that bestowed on their members not just wages and pensions, purpose and respect, but even in many cases a social identity reinforced and made visible by way of a uniform decorated in colors and patterns specific to the person's group. These corporate units exhibited cleavages in terms of wealth and responsibility, proximity to and distance from the ruler, and others. But they operated on the basis of common goals and allegiance to the leadership and in this sense grew out of or merged with older forms of loyal association, namely, personal clienteles of the kind that furnished the building blocks of Russian politics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁶ In time other types of organizations became "incorporated" and subject to a form of state tutelage that is a characteristic feature of corporatism (see below). One of the reasons the *soslovie* and class models cause difficulty for scholars "even as a working hypothesis," as Confino wrote, may be their failure to capture this more fundamental movement toward a corporatist state and society.
- 7 Analysts may have avoided describing Russia's development in these terms because of the unfortunate associations that corporatism carries with fascism and Nazism, as the remark cited above by Andrei Illarionov suggests.⁷ But corporatism and fascism are by no means synonymous. As for Russia, Hans Rogger some time ago explained that fascism did not and could not have appeared in tsarist Russia, despite the efforts of some scholars to find it there.⁸ Even Stalinism, which exhibited some features of fascism such as the leader cult, did not include other characteristic elements such as glorification of a nation of blood, nostalgia for historical social arrangements, and explicit racism. Russia could not be usefully labeled fascist at any time in the past, and attempts by a few scholars to brand it so today are, as Andreas Umland has recently argued, unwise and possibly dangerous.⁹
- 8 I use the term corporatism in two ways. The first refers to the incorporation of individuals into functionally differentiated bodies like the tsarist ministries, referred to earlier, and also business enterprises, labor unions, and other organizations that act collectively while imparting to their members a sense of purpose and identity. The second refers to social and governmental arrangements designed to mediate between these other bodies and to balance their interests for the common good. These arrangements have formed in democratic as well as in authoritarian systems and have been inflected by leftist as well as rightist ideologies. Democratic versions have appeared in Sweden and a number of other European states; leftist versions, even if we exclude self-declared "socialist" states, have appeared in Peru and some other Latin American countries. Although Philippe Schmitter and other theorists of corporatism have sketched typologies that include a number of variants, the concept refers in essence to a system of authority and interest representation that is designed to integrate labor and capital into a web of hierarchically ordered and functionally defined units that are guided or directed by the state to produce socially peaceful outcomes.¹⁰
- 9 The historical foundations of modern corporatism go back to the patrimonial regimes of early modern times, in which public and private domains easily interpenetrated one another and elites and the state administration cooperated in absorbing and directing rising social forces.¹¹ In Russia, this type of regime emerged as early as the fifteenth century. According to Richard Pipes, the most prominent western student of Russian conservatism, patrimonialism or the notion that Russian rulers are private owners of

their domains and everything that resides in them, derived from the reality of power in the period of Mongol conquest when public authority rested with the Mongols and Russian princes were understood to be merely private owners of appanages. As Mongol control receded, the Moscow princes (as well as other less wealthy princes) elided their newly-acquired public power with their private ownership. All land, goods, and persons in their domain belonged to them as patrimonial rulers. The Russian Orthodox Church reinforced this power by allying itself with the ruler and conferring on him the title of Caesar (tsar), a designation previously reserved for the Mongol khan. Given this merger of personal ownership and state sovereignty, when independent enterprises developed profitably, the ruler freely appropriated them as regalia.¹² By the same logic, when other organized bodies emerged, they were absorbed and directed by the state. Indeed, the state itself created corporate units with the aim of fostering military or economic strength, for example the *dvorianstvo* and *magistraty*. Although these two state-constructed units coincided with *soslovie* groups, they did not, as Confino rightly concluded, function as social estates and were always subject to state tutelage. Take, for example, the *dvorianstvo*. After creating this service group in early modern times, the state set the conditions of entry by enacting the Table of Ranks, formed noble societies for the estate in the reforms of Catherine II, and thereafter increasingly regulated relations of the landed nobility and its labor force (the *enserfed* peasantry). Finally, in the reforms of Nicholas I the state again redefined membership in the nobility and in the following reign divested it of its labor force by emancipating the serfs.

- 10 From this point on the tsarist government, acting in fits and starts and without a consciously conceived long-range plan, was converting the patrimonial state into a modern corporate state system. As modern corporations, organizations of industrialists, labor unions, and professional and voluntary organizations supplanted older social formations, the state bureaucracy sought to manage and direct them toward economic development under conditions of social harmony.¹³
- 11 Indeed, the state bureaucracy was itself a primary example of corporate organization. I have already mentioned the corporate character of the ministries in their provision of purpose, identity, and security. It is enough to add that by the twentieth century each specialist ministry had, as a leading historian of the bureaucracy writes, "its own microcosmic world of educational institutions, offices, and other career support systems in the provinces."¹⁴ In short, the ministries provided a life course for ambitious and loyal recruits and their families. Corporatism can be seen, too, in the close tutelage and protection given to industry and banks, which were regularly subsidized and bailed out by the government. The Society for Assistance to Russian Industry and Trade worked hand in hand with the government to develop policies of protectionism.¹⁵ Syndicates and cartels were permitted and in some cases even encouraged by the government.¹⁶ The Department (later Ministry) of Trade and Industry brought into its advisory structures the leading representatives of industry. In 1906 a permanent Council of Representatives of Industry and Trade was formed to act as a corporate lobby for a wide range of business enterprises.
- 12 While a central objective of the corporate state was the promotion and protection of commerce and industry, it also sought to manage relations between business and labor. Here, too, the aspiration of the Russian government was clear, even if its plans ultimately fell short of intentions. Efforts in this direction began as early as the 1850s with the convening of state committees on the labor question, and intervention began in

earnest in the early 1880s when the government enacted a series of laws for the protection of women and children workers. At the same time it established a factory inspectorate to monitor compliance.¹⁷ A far-reaching labor code followed in 1866, much to the dismay of factory owners and industrialists. Although the conscientious efforts by factory inspectors to enforce the law prompted a backlash from the employer associations that led to the dismissal of the finance minister who had sponsored the reforms (Nikolai Bunge), the inspectorate remained, along with provincial factory boards, for the regulation of relations between labor and management. It is worth mentioning that a pioneering historian of the factory inspectorate, Frederick Giffin, pointed out in Bunge's defense that he had "not violated the traditional practices of the government [...] On the contrary, his efforts to regulate the relations of management and labour merely reflected the unique extent to which in Russia the state customarily intervened in the social and economic affairs of the people."¹⁸ After the turn of the century, new measures were added that required employers to provide health insurance and pensions for sick and disabled workers. For their part, the business leaders were organizing to defend their interests, most actively in the stock exchange societies and in the yearly congresses of representatives of industry and trade that were held after 1906.¹⁹ These groups coordinated their responses to government policy and even generated their own proposals for government action. Members of the exchange committees served on a large number of government councils in specialist and advisory roles, being thus incorporated into the process of central state decision making. Indeed, a principal complaint of the business representatives was that their vote was merely advisory and that the officials made the final decisions.²⁰ The business representatives wanted then what Andrei Illarionov contends business leaders have now finally achieved in post-socialist Russia.

- 13 The requirements imposed on employers in tsarist times were complemented by attempts to capture and direct the labor movement from the inside. An extreme case came in the form of the police socialism inspired by the chief of the Moscow *okhrana* Sergei Zubatov, a tactic that, unfortunately, led to the catastrophe of Bloody Sunday. But, whatever its missteps, the government was gradually moving the earlier patrimonial regime toward what we now can recognize as a type of corporatist state in which the tsar and his ministers sought to guide development by incorporating organized interest groups into government councils, subsidizing many of them and mediating between them. This course, established by the 1880s, continued right up to the revolution of 1917.²¹
- 14 Although I have emphasized the role of the state, it is worth adding here that the process of incorporation was not unidirectional. The state did not simply create and direct organized groups. Corporate groups themselves attempted to colonize the state. Modern organizations, just as in the case of clientele and patronage groups in earlier times, sought to capture agencies of the state and use them for their own purposes. The effectiveness of a particular ruling regime could be measured by its ability to balance and guide these forces while not capitulating to one or another of them.
- 15 The developments of the late tsarist era came to fruition in the Soviet state, which incorporated and guided virtually every institution. This and the absence of private property represented a quantitative change that theorists have tended to believe makes socialist states qualitatively different. This is especially so in the case of theorists who accept the label "totalitarian" for socialist systems.²² If, however, we set aside the

aspirational totalitarianism of the Stalin years when Party leaders sometimes yielded to the urge to destroy rather than guide and tutor groups that might oppose its policies, we can see that the Soviet leadership, too, was operating as the mediator of competing corporate interests, many of which, just as in the late tsarist period, were represented in the ministerial hierarchies. The result was what Jerry Hough has labeled institutional or institutionalized pluralism, but it might just as well be referred to as corporatism.²³ In promoting development, the Soviet leaders sought to guide and oblige various legitimate competing interests (unsanctioned political action, certain cultural expression, and nationality assertions were obviously excluded and suppressed) with the aim of modernizing while maintaining social harmony. Soviet Russia behaved much like other authoritarian corporatist states.

- 16 By employing the *soslovie* to class paradigm to explain modernization, we may have hindered more than helped our efforts. The baggy concepts of estate and class, being structuralist in character, are not conducive to change, whereas corporations are functionalist in concept and therefore adaptable. They are formed and recognized through their service to the state. What is more, an analysis of Russia as a patrimonial state on its way to becoming a corporate state and society allows us to understand the development of tsarist, socialist, and post-socialist Russia in a single conceptual framework.²⁴
- 17 A second implicit problem related to the *soslovie* paradigm involves the everyday interactions of Russians of various social and cultural levels. Michael Confino was well aware of this question, as he first raised it nearly 20 years ago in a working paper presented at the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies in Washington, D.C.²⁵ In his analysis, he drew on the geographic and statistical mapping of St. Petersburg by James Bater and pointed out that Russians of every social level lived side-by-side in the city and often in the very same building.²⁶ The residential profile, Confino explained, showed

an admixture, of classes rather than segregation, even in the so-called fashionable areas. [...] all groups and classes were living in an extremely *mixed* social milieu and economic environment. With regard to housing, to use a metaphor warranted by the facts, the social classes dispersion of the population was not chiefly a horizontal or an areal one (as in the big West European and North American cities), but a vertical one: in the central city (with very few exceptions), the first floor was occupied mainly by workplaces and residences of small-business owners; the middle floors (second to fourth) were the domain of well-to-do noble, "bourgeois" and officials' families; above and below, in the garrets and cellars, and also away – in the backyards: lower income groups, workers, and household servants (men and women).²⁷
- 18 In other words, Russian society was not composed of isolated and alienated units, as the *soslovie* paradigm suggests, but of a variety of socio-economic groups that daily encountered one another as denizens of the same streets or even residents of the same property.
- 19 But how does one get at this reality, given the tsarist government's decision to administer Russia as a society of *sosloviia*? Because Russia was ruled as an assortment of socially specific groups, records were organized and preserved by institution and social position. As a consequence, scholars have found it difficult to integrate and analyze relations between people of different social statuses. The observable interactions, when they went beyond a single ministry, party, or social estate, were usually two-sided.

Historians examine petitions from subordinates to superiors or look at court cases that pitted a person of one social estate against a person of another. But these limited and often conflictual documents tell less about what held Russian society together than about points of stress and possible rupture. Examples of this type of inter-estate conflict can be found in Elise Wirtschafter's recent response to Michael Confino's essay on *soslovie*.²⁸ The barriers posed by this structure of preserved knowledge, when added to the society versus state paradigm so central to the intelligentsia's sense of identity, left us with a peculiar bibliographic legacy. We have shelves of books on the nobility, the intelligentsia, the peasantry, various government ministries, and a growing body of literature on the clergy and the merchants, but these studies by and large consider social groups and institutions in isolation from the state and the rest of Russian society. The principal exceptions are, as just noted, instances of conflict with other groups. No wonder that historians have been inclined to focus on the dysfunctional aspects of Russia's development. The *soslovie* paradigm steers them directly toward this dimension and away from the more functional features.

- 20 As George Yaney pointed out nearly a half century ago in response to the famous debate sparked by Leopold Haimson in the *Slavic Review*, the workings of a society are best understood by examining its "going concerns." The analyses of Haimson and the others in the debate, however, considered only the points of tension and conflict. As a result, Yaney contended, the debaters ended up basing their judgments on the slogans, wild hopes, and delusions of would-be revolutionaries and therefore failed to see clearly the social dynamics of the time. Even the assessments of government officials, to the extent they used western standards to measure Russia's progress, were misguided. According to Yaney, "If one is to consider the strengths and weaknesses of Russian society prior to World War I, one must first of all seek out the relationships which formed the 'going concerns,' focusing on what they did, not what they said they were doing."²⁹ In this rather awkward sentence, Yaney meant to say that Russian managers often lamented their inability to achieve their stated and usually western-influenced goals, angrily accusing colleagues, workers, government officials and others of impeding their progress. It is not difficult therefore to find areas of friction, stress, and potential rupture in Russia's rapidly industrializing society. It is evidently harder to see that the frictions and stresses were in many cases the result of growing interactions of people who had not previously worked together to reach mutual goals. But work together they did, and they achieved remarkable progress. In the industrial and commercial enterprises, professional societies, the *zemstvos*, the rapidly expanding cooperative movement, schools, the budding peasant legal culture, emergent political parties, voluntary associations, charities, and many other manifestations of collaboration within and across social groups we find the going concerns that allowed Russia to function as an integrated society. Scholars who simply read back from the collapse of the autocratic government and sketch a picture of Russia as a dysfunctional polity miss crucial developments that were transforming the country into a modern industrial state and eventual superpower. This was, of course, a central criticism leveled by Michael Confino, who complained that historians were in the grip of a teleological impulse that obliged them to seek out the roots of the governmental and societal collapse that they knew had to come.
- 21 Similarly, we need to be aware of how established categories of classification conceal rather than illuminate the relationships that allowed Russians to function effectively as a society. It is hard to disagree with Michael Confino's contention that the *soslovie* paradigm, to the extent that it designated social estates on the European model rather

than merely social groups, constituted a blinder of this sort. Whatever utility the *soslovie* classifications may have offered the tsarist government and Russian subjects for pigeon-holing individuals and defining the privileges and obligations attaching to them, it has obscured our understanding of the relationships that held Russia together as a society. The unfortunate bibliographic legacy, mentioned earlier, that the *soslovie* idea and its consequent ordering of archives has bequeathed our field is only now being overcome in a few studies that demonstrate the weaknesses of the paradigm and in others that reveal some of the vertical relationships that characterized Russian society.³⁰

- 22 My own research has sought to investigate the vertical relationships that cut across *soslovie* lines and illuminated the bonds, or going concerns, that lay at the heart of the Russian social system. My earliest research project discussed the clienteles that formed in support of a patron who occupied a high position in politics and state service. The patron could provide jobs and protection, while the clients and their minions furnished patrons with information on competing clienteles, support in shaping public opinion, and the power to act (through their positions in the government and military).³¹ My most recent monograph was conceived as a direct response to Michael Confino's challenge to explore interactions between people of different social positions. I found that this could best be done by getting away from the administratively organized sources and finding windows into the everyday life of society. A forty-year diary of a provincial merchant in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries opened such a window. The diary revealed a merchant family that in no way fit the intelligentsia's hostile portrayal of a "dark kingdom," self-enclosed, ignorant, and brutal. The merchant and his family were in almost daily contact with people at every level of society: his merchant and artisan colleagues, of course, but also central and local government officials, the clergy from parish priests to the bishop, serfs who were members of the household, and at least a dozen noble families, including the illustrious princes Golitsyn and the widow of Ivan Orlov, one of the famous Orlov brothers who engineered the coup that brought Catherine II to the throne. The merchant in question became well-known locally for his grand masonry townhouse, the first in his provincial city, and the home's magnificent gardens and orangery. He attended the theater, read books, purchased scientific instruments, and sent his first son to a private *pansion* in Moscow that taught foreign languages.³² In short, we see in central Russia of the eighteenth century the kind of daily mixing of social ranks that Confino pointed to in early twentieth-century Petersburg. And the provincial merchant family of my study who moved so freely across social and cultural boundaries, while not typical of all merchants, was far from alone. As we know from other diaries and studies of provincial and Moscow life, well-to-do merchant families were enjoying many of the same possessions and pleasures as the nobility, if not its legal privileges.³³
- 23 To see this reality it is necessary to radically alter our scale of observation. Historians who accept the given organizational categories of *soslovie* and class and base an analysis on its workings will capture a certain high-angle or macrohistorical view of the society, comparable in some respects to an aerial photograph of city or landscape. This perspective may be adequate for general surveys of Russian history, especially if the objective is to make Russia comprehensible to readers familiar with the histories of West European societies.
- 24 This view from on high will not suffice, however, if one wishes to understand Russian social dynamics on their own terms. For this, two other perspectives are important. The

first is a clear understanding of the extraordinary variation that resided within *soslovie* and class groupings. Because Michael Confino and Elise Wirtschafter have written much about this, I will not dwell on it here. It is enough to remind readers that the nobility included people of every socio-economic level, from fabulously wealthy land and factory owners to thousands of impoverished persons who lived no better than peasants, were uneducated, did not fulfill service obligations, and earned a living by small farming, delivering mail or running a local inn. To give one example, the merchant of my study on his travels through Tver province, where many such poor “nobles” lived, looked on them with a mixture of surprise and pity. Within a few days of staying at a village inn run by a poor noble, the merchant in question and his wife were in Petersburg attending the theater and ceremonial events at which the emperor and imperial family appeared. The uneducated and penurious nobles of Tver province in their gray peasant kaftans would not likely have felt welcome at such events. Peasants, too, could be found at virtually every socio-economic level. Many were seasonal or permanent traders in the towns, artisans, factory workers (whether in cities or manufacturing hamlets). Some owned or managed factories and other commercial enterprises and were on their way to becoming registered townspeople or merchants. But the behavior of even the large numbers who remained agriculturalists could not, as Confino pointed out, be understood through social estate or class analyses.

- 25 The second perspective is microhistorical. If the macro view resembles a grainy aerial photograph, the micro perspective requires the filming of a small area at ground level. Here social interactions are much denser and more complicated than is evident at the macro level, where “reality” thins out and historians apply the imprecise label of *soslovie* and sketch long-term developments. Only at the micro level can we observe the social relations and “going concerns” that constituted a community. And as the critic Siegfried Kracauer long ago pointed out, observations at this level are unlikely to be commensurate with what is visible at the macro level. To begin with, one can capture the character of relations at the micro level only if one examines it without preconceptions derived from the larger picture. For the most part, historians who have drawn on the minutiae of historical episodes have done so merely to select micro events that will confirm an already formulated generalization. This misses the point of such an investigation.³⁴ We should investigate the social dynamics that function in a locality for their own sake and only then judge the degree of their fit with what is seen at the macro level. Good examples can be found in the work of Italian historians. To take a well-known example, a study by Giovanni Levi discovered that what historians working on the macro level thought to be a modern “depersonalized” market in land turned out on closer inspection to be a land exchange in which prices were set by kinship bonds.³⁵ Even better known is the celebrated study by Carlo Ginzburg of the miller Mennochio, whose testimony opened our eyes to a religious world tenaciously resistant to the domination of the Catholic Church.³⁶
- 26 More of this type of close study is needed if we are to get beyond the *soslovie* paradigm and understand the going concerns and social bonds that allowed Russia to function effectively and grow into the powerful modern nation that emerged in the twentieth century. We have seen a few studies. One of the first was Steven L. Hoch’s examination of a serf village in Tambov province. It shed new light on peasant diet and undermined the established view of the immiseration of the Russian peasantry under serfdom. More importantly, Hoch revealed the social dynamic that maintained control in the village, an

alliance between bailiffs and serf heads of household or, in other words, a system that united people of different *sosloviia* to their mutual advantage.³⁷

- 27 Again, my own close study of a provincial merchant and his society shows the kind of interactions and cooperation across a variety of *soslovie* lines that characterized business, government, and charitable projects all across Russia. A good example is the restoration of a cathedral in the merchant's town. The project involved the cooperation and coordinated response of the bishop and local clergy, leading members of the local nobility, the town's entire merchant community, Moscow architects, contractors, and other professionals, and state officials. Much of the coordination and mobilization of charitable contributions was done by the mayor, but the bishop and leading nobles likewise played important roles. These people met regularly in one another's homes and at the cathedral rectory, and their efforts accomplished a major overhaul of the crumbling sixteenth-century cathedral in less than three years while the country was at war on two fronts and the central government unable to provide funding. This was an exceptional project, but the social dynamics that made it possible were not. Even during quieter times, state officials, leading merchants, nobles, and clergy in the town dined at one another's homes and cooperated on business and other projects.³⁸ A number of Russian scholars are beginning in studies of everyday life to encounter similar interactions. For example, the current research of Alexander Kamenskii on financial transactions in the town of Bezhetsk have turned up interesting cases of close contacts and common actions by people of different social positions. Kamenskii reports that while documents in the town magistracy mostly concern townsmen, they also "demonstrate their communication and business relations with all other social groups – peasants, nobles, clergy, military, merchants from other towns, clerks, etc. This very fact shows that the borders between different classes in eighteenth-century Russia were not as strict as they are considered to be."³⁹
- 28 *Soslovie* designations were nevertheless of great importance as markers of dignity and financial, military, and other obligations. To continue the focus on commercial families, they strove to enter the ranks of the merchant estate in order to escape the degraded status of poll-tax payers and the accompanying obligations of conscription and work services. Once in the merchant ranks, Russians anxiously sought to remain there by whatever means they could, including pooling the resources of several family members to reach the qualifying capital requirement each year. The greatest source of anxiety for these people was the risk of falling back into the poll-tax population, and whenever possible they sought to elevate the position of merchants to an ascriptive status like that enjoyed by the nobles and clergy.⁴⁰ Indeed, as merchants increasingly recognized their importance to the state, they sought to nudge their sumptuary privileges and other outward expressions of dignity toward those of the nobility, even while in some respects, especially after the Napoleonic invasion, they wished to portray themselves as different, more genuinely Russian and patriotic, than the nobility.⁴¹
- 29 If *soslovie* markers created opportunities and anxieties, *soslovie* institutions could serve as protective mechanisms for in-groups. As Elise Wirtschafter mentions, Imperial Russia either suffered or benefited (depending on one's point of view and circumstances) from administrative fragmentation and lack of translocal authority and representation. Every local administrative organ was in some sense an agent of the central state, whether or not it was locally elected. When a state agent in the person of the *voevoda* or police chief (*ispravnik*) demanded something of a local magistracy, the magistrates had to comply.

But when no state-ordered commands were involved, these bodies were free to manage affairs and decide cases in their own way so long as they followed the normal procedures and protocols. The merchant of my study, for example, had fallen into debts so large that he had no hope of paying them off. Before declaring bankruptcy and asking permission to continue at liberty so that he could earn the money needed to satisfy his creditors, he transferred most of his assets to family members through third parties and concocted a variety of other schemes to avoid destitution and spare his family the shame of descending into the poll-tax population. Despite vigorous and persistent protests from several creditors, nobles for the most part, the magistracy interpreted laws and even sought out remote and scarcely relevant precedents that they claimed allowed them to ignore the transfer of assets and permit the merchant to remain at liberty. The merchant had been a colleague and friend, serving for many years as a magistrate and then mayor, had contributed generously to local religious and charitable efforts, and had arranged his affairs in such a way that no local merchants, apart from his near relatives, had been injured by his misdeeds. Efforts by his creditors to appeal outside the jurisdiction of the local magistrates proved of no avail. The decision was theirs alone, so long as a state interest was not involved.⁴²

- 30 But this story of the use of a *soslovie* institution for protection of one of its members, while certainly an instance of personal and even *soslovie* solidarity, is not as clear a marker of division as one might expect. Some of the merchant's allies in the case were nobles, and his personal contacts and business associations continued in the future to include members of the nobility as well as members of most other social groups. The personal, commercial, and recreational dimensions of life included enduring vertical relationships that are obscured by a view of Russian society primarily through a *soslovie* lens.
- 31 This remained the era of sporadic government intrusion at the local level and rule by clienteles. We are still looking at a patrimonial regime ruling a society based on loosely organized institutions, not functionally defined and action-oriented corporate bodies. A short time later we would see a new approach. In 1800, the government enacted a modern bankruptcy law aimed at detailed and functionally differentiated regulation of relations between debtors and creditors.⁴³ The modern corporate state was beginning to emerge.

NOTES

2. Michael Confino, "The *Soslovie* (Estate) Paradigm: Reflections on some open questions," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 49, 4 (2008): 682.

3. The refusal of the neoliberal economists of the 1990s to articulate systematically their strategies was an understandable reaction to the doctrinaire ideology of the Soviet era, but as Olga Shevchenko has noted, this stance had consequences. "[B]y refusing to generate some version of a 'Yeltsin doctrine' in dialogue with major social groups and organizations, Yeltsin's government was leaving its subjects without a way to meaningfully relate to the ongoing changes and to the very real sacrifices that these

changes entailed." See her *Crisis and the Everyday in Postsocialist Moscow* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 24.

4. Yuri Zarakhovich, "Q&A: Putin's Critical Adviser," *Time*, Dec. 31, 2005, online: <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1145192,00.html> (accessed Sept. 4, 2010).

5. Viktor Cherkessov, "Nel'zia dopustit', chtoby voiny prevratilis' v torgovtsev," *Kommersant*, 184 (3760), Oct. 9, 2007.

6. See David L. Ransel, *The Politics of Catherinian Russia: The Panin Party* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); Robert O. Crummey, *Aristocrats and Servitors: The Boyar Elite in Russia, 1613-1689* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); Daniel Orlovsky, "Political Clientelism in Russia: the Historical Perspective," in T.H. Rigby and Bohdan Harsymiw, eds., *Leadership Selection and Patron-Client Relations in the USSR and Yugoslavia* (London: n.p., 1983), 186.

7. For a recent enlightening analysis of the reasons that this development has not opened the way (as least not yet) to outright fascism of the Italian or German type, see Steffen Kailitz and Andreas Umland, "Why the Fascists Won't Take Over the Kremlin (For Now): A Comparison of Democracy's Breakdown and Fascism's Rise in Weimar Germany and Post-Soviet Russia," Working Paper 14, Higher School of Economics (Moscow, 2010).

8. Hans Rogger, "Was There a Russian Fascism? The Union of the Russian People," *Journal of Modern History*, 36, 4 (1964): 398-415.

9. Umland's comments are part of an instructive debate on fascism in Eastern Europe and the utility of the term for analyzing geographical groups of societies or societies outside the interwar period. See *East Central Europe*, 37 (2010): 331-371 (for Umland's contribution, see 345-352).

10. For the classic comprehensive definition, see Max Weber, ed., *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, with an introduction by Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 145-152; Philippe C. Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?" and Howard J. Wiarda, "Corporatism and Development in the Iberic-Latin World: Persistent Strains and New Variations," both in Fredrick B. Pike and Thomas Stritch, eds., *The New Corporatism: Social-Political Structures in the Iberian World* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), 10-11, 86-87.

11. In the Ibero-Latin corporatist countries Roman Catholic political thought is considered an important intellectual component, but it should be kept in mind that one of most influential theorists of corporatism, Mihail Manoilescu, came from Romania, which shares an Eastern Orthodox culture with Russia. The practical and ideological justifications for the interdependence of state and corporate bodies, beginning with the church, have been stronger in the Eastern Church than in the Western. For Manoilescu's contributions to corporatist ideas in Latin America, see Joseph L. Love, "Theorizing Underdevelopment: Latin America and Romania, 1860-1950," *Estudos Avançados*, 4, 8 (São Paulo Jan./Apr. 1990), and Schmitter, "Still the Century....," 117-125.

12. For a general background, see Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), where he was channeling the ideas of Peter Struve. Pipes developed this notion of sovereignty in more detail in his *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: A Study in Political Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), see especially chapter 1.

13. It is interesting to observe that even voluntary associations, which are thought to be the core of a civil society elsewhere, in tsarist Russia could not escape the tutelage of the

state. See the recent work on this by Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), who nevertheless believes that civil society can emerge under an autocratic regime.

14. Daniel T. Orlovsky, "Professionalism in the Ministerial Bureaucracy on the Eve of the February Revolution of 1917," in Harley D. Balzer, ed., *Russia's Missing Middle Class: The Professions in Russian History*, (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 272-273.

15. *Istoriia predprinimatel'stva v Rossii* (Kniga vtoraia. Vtoraia polovina XIX-nachalo XX veka) (M.: Rosspen, 2000), 175-208.

16. Hans Rogger, *Russia in the Age of Modernisation and Revolution, 1881-1917* (London: Longman, 1983), 118.

17. Frederick C. Giffin, "The Formative Years of the Russian Factory Inspectorate," *Slavic Review*, 25, 4 (Dec. 1966): 641-650.

18. Frederick C. Giffin, "I.I. Yanzhul, Russia's First District Factory Inspector," *Slavonic and East European Review*, 49, 114 (Jan. 1971): 88.

19. There was also the Council of Trade and Manufacture, a quasi-governmental advisory body (its membership was appointed by the minister of finance) that was not very active and, for both these reasons, did not enjoy the trust of business interests. V.V. Izgarshev, "Metody i formy predstavitel'noi deiatel'nosti organizatsii krupnoi burzhuzii v nachale XX veka," <http://www.niiss.ru/Publications/Mag/15/izgarshev.htm> (accessed Jan., 22, 2011), 1-2.

20. *Ibid.*, 4-6.

21. For a recent survey of the "worker question," see L.V. Kurpriianskaia's chapter in *Istoriia predprinimatel'stva v Rossii*, 343-437.

22. See, for example, Wiarda, "Corporatism and Development," 11.

23. Hough provides a very instructive review of the nuanced analyses that supplanted the totalitarian model, including his own, which incorporates features of several of the others. See Jerry F. Hough and Merle Fainsod, *How the Soviet Union Is Governed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 518-555. Some post-Soviet Russian analysts indeed refer to the system of ownership and control in Soviet times as corporatist. See V. Tambovtsev et al., *Prava sobstvennosti, privatizatsiia i natsionalizatsiia v Rossii* (M.: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2009), 107-135.

24. I want to thank Kimitaka Matsuzato for suggesting this summary of my analysis.

25. Michael Confino, "Issues and Nonissues in Russian Social History and Historiography (1890s-1920s)," Colloquium Paper, March 24, 1983. *Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies Occasional Paper*, no. 165.

26. See James H. Bater, *St Petersburg: Industrialization and Change* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976).

27. Confino, "Issues and Nonissues," 55.

28. Elise K. Wirtschafter, "Social Categories in Russian Imperial History," *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 50, 1 (2009), especially, 235-241.

29. George L. Yaney, "Social Stability in Prerevolutionary Russia: A Critical Note," *Slavic Review*, 24, 3 (Sept. 1965): 521-527, quote on 524 (Yaney borrowed the term "going concerns" from the economist John R. Commons).

30. Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia*; Elise Kimberling Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), which discusses the ease with which people moved between and beyond given social categories; Jane Burbank, *Russian Peasants Go to Court: Legal Culture in the Countryside, 1905-1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) on the integration of peasant legal practice with that of the rest of the society.
31. Ransel, *The Politics of Catherinian Russia*. Refinements and extensions of this analysis can be found in the work of John LeDonne, *Ruling Russia: Politics and Administration in the Age of Absolutism 1762-1796* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), and especially a recent dissertation by Aleksandra V. Bekasova, "Sem'ia, rodstvo, i pokrovitel'stvo v Rossii XVIII veka: 'Domovoe poddanstvo' grafa P.A. Rumiantseva," dissertation, Institute of History, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, 2006.
32. For other examples, see M.V. Briantsev, *Kul'tura russkogo kupechestva: Vospitanie i obrazovanie* (Briansk: Kursiv, 1999), esp. chapters 1 and 2; Richard Stites, *Serfdom, Society, and the Arts in Imperial Russia: The Pleasure and the Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) on the importance of merchants as patrons and audience for theater and the arts.
33. David L. Ransel, *A Russian Merchant's Tale: The Life and Adventures of Ivan Alekseevich Tolchënov, Based on His Diary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Ol'ga V. Fomina, "Imushchestvenno-demograficheskaiia kharakteristika moskovskoi kupecheskoi sem'i poslednei treti XVIII veka," dissertation, Moscow State University, 2003; N.D. Chechulin, *Russkoe provintsial'noe obshchestvo vo vtoroi polovine XVIII v.* (St. Petersburg: n.p., 1889).
34. Siegfried Kracauer, *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), chapter 5.
35. Giovanni Levi, *Inheriting Power: the Story of an Exorcist*, transl. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
36. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).
37. Steven L. Hoch, *Serfdom and Social Control in Russia: Petrovskoe, a Village in Tambov* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
38. Ransel, *A Russian Merchant's Tale*, 136-44 and passim. See also A.V. Iaganov and E.I. Ruzaeva, *Uspenskii sobor v Dmitrove* (M.: Severnyi Palomnik, 2003), and David L. Ransel, "Sites of Veneration, Sites of Memory: The City of Dmitrov and Its Spiritual Symbols," in Gary Marker et al., eds., *Everyday Life in Russian History* (Bloomington, In: Slavica, 2010): 145-166.
39. Alexander Kamenskii, "Recent Studies on the History of Daily Life in Eighteenth-Century Russia: Problems and Achievements," paper presented to the Indiana University workshop on Everyday Life in Russia: Strategies, Subjectivities and Perspectives, May 13-15, 2010, Bloomington, Indiana. Kamenskii earlier published a monograph on everyday life in Bezhetsk but did not there focus on cross-soslovie interactions. See A.B. Kamenskii, *Povsednevnost' russkikh gorodskikh obyvatelei: Istoricheskie anekdoty iz provintsial'noi zhizni XVIII veka* (M.: Rossiiskii gos. gum. univ..., 2006).
40. N.V. Kozlova, "Rossiiskii absoliutizm i kupechestvo," cand. diss., Moscow University, 2 vols., 1994, 545-547.

41. David L. Ransel, "Neither Nobles nor Peasants: Plain Painting and the Emergence of the Merchant Estate," in Valerie A. Kivelson and Joan Neuberger, eds., *Picturing Russia: Explorations in Visual Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 76-80.

42. See Ransel, *A Russian Merchant's Tale*, chapter 6.

43. "Istoriia bankrotstva v Rossii," Bankrotstvo i Arbitrazhnoe upravlenie, website of A.A. Rusanov, <http://www.bankrotstvo-nsk.ru/insolvency/russia/rushistory> (accessed Feb. 3, 2011).

ABSTRACTS

Abstract

The essay commends Michael Confino's challenging criticisms over many years of the conceptualizations commonly used by historians of Russia. David L. Ransel agrees with the criticisms of the *soslovie* paradigm advanced by Confino in his recent essay. Ransel suggests that by adapting the *soslovie* to class conceptualization of Russia's modernization, historians may have missed seeing a more fruitful and instructive conceptualization, one usually associated with Ibero-Latin regimes rather than Russia, namely, the development of Russia from a patrimonial state to a corporate state and society. Ransel also points out the obstacles presented by the *soslovie* paradigm for understanding of the micro-dynamics of Russian history. The *soslovie* paradigm tends to blind scholars to a feature of Russian life that Confino himself had commented on many years ago: Russians of all social statuses lived in close proximity and interacted daily. Ransel gives examples from his own work and the work of others and calls for more study of the micro-dynamics of Russian history.

Résumé

Le présent essai appuie les critiques stimulantes formulées par Michael Confino pendant de nombreuses années sur les conceptualisations communément utilisées par les historiens de la Russie. L'auteur admet les critiques de la notion de *soslovie* avancées par Confino dans son dernier article (*CMR*, 49 (4), 2008). Il laisse entendre qu'en adoptant le modèle selon lequel la modernisation de la Russie se serait opérée par le passage d'une société de *soslovija* à une société de classes, les historiens ont pu passer à côté d'une autre conceptualisation plus fructueuse et édifiante, associée d'ordinaire aux régimes latino-américains et ibériens plutôt qu'à la Russie, à savoir, le développement de la Russie par le passage d'un État patrimonial à un État et une société corporatistes. L'auteur pointe également les obstacles que soulève la notion de *soslovie* dans la compréhension de la microdynamique de l'histoire russe. La notion de *soslovie* tend à masquer un aspect de la vie russe que Confino lui-même avait commenté il y a longtemps déjà : les Russes de tous statuts sociaux vivaient en proximité étroite et étaient en contact quotidiennement. L'auteur propose des exemples extraits de différents travaux, dont les siens, et invite à utiliser davantage l'approche microdynamique de l'histoire russe.

AUTHOR

DAVID L. RANSEL

Indiana University, Department of History