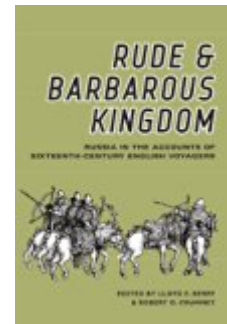


Lloyd E. Berry, Robert O. Crummey, eds. *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom: Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers*. 1968; Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012. xxiii + 391 pp. \$34.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-299-04764-1.

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Russia in Early Modern English Travel Accounts

For a long time, European travel accounts on Muscovy and Russia have been valuable sources for researching late medieval and early modern Russian history.[1] Using various methods and approaches, publications originally written and printed in the sixteenth century depict Muscovy in general, and its rulers and form of government in particular. The reports can be divided into two major groups: texts of continental origin and writings by English authors. This classification is not merely a geographical one but rather a fundamental matter of perspective defined by the very nature of the encounters of trading Englishmen and Russians on the one side and the violent conflict of Russians and their continental neighbors in the long-lasting Livonian War (1558-82/83) on the other.

The present volume is a reprint of a collection of travelogues and reports belonging to the first group. These important primary sources reveal the objectives and development of English-Muscovite relations from the middle of the sixteenth century until the end of the Elizabethan Age. The material in this edition, repeatedly reprinted in older editions and compilations, was modernized in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization by Lloyd E. Berry, a specialist in English literature. Robert O. Crummey, well known for his excellent studies in pre-modern Russian history, was responsible for the general introduction, placing the writings—which are very different in extent, content, and comprehension—clearly and briefly in historical context. He also wrote the essays that

introduce the primary texts and their authors. The annotation of the travel accounts was a collaborative effort of both editors. The book was first published in 1968, and soon became a successful standard sourcebook both in research and university teaching. The fortieth anniversary of its publication was celebrated by a festschrift dedicated to Crummey (*Rude & Barbarous Kingdom Revisited: Essays in Russian History and Culture in Honor of Robert O. Crummey* [2008], edited by Chester L. Dunning, Russell E. Martin, and Daniel Rowland). Its title points to the negative judgments of the early English voyagers.

Berry and Crummey chose travel accounts from six early English voyagers to Muscovy. They differed in professional background, education, intellectual profile, and taste. Among the selections are accounts by adventurous merchants looking for new markets in “exotic” countries like Muscovy and searching for hitherto unknown sea passages and geographic information to outrival continental competitors in trade. They are followed by writings of experienced Elizabethan diplomats in negotiations at the Muscovite court of the tsar, Ivan IV Grozny. A poet joined one of those diplomatic missions and also recorded his (stereotyped) perceptions.

In a first section headlined “Two Early Voyages,” the editors present Richard Chancellor’s report of a voyage exploring the sea route from England through the North Sea, sailing in an eastern direction and northward to the Scandinavian Peninsula into the White Sea. The original

aim of the expedition, which contained two other ships, under the command of Hugh Willoughby was to find an alternative route to China, but the venture failed in the autumnal storms and the Russian winter. Only Chancellor and his crew survived and discovered Muscovy for the English trade. In his report, Chancellor described not only the challenges of the journey but also the geography of Muscovy, including the main cities and their economic significance. His account contains a description of the ceremonies at court and perceptions concerning the juridical system and religious matters.

Like Chancellor, Anthony Jenkinson was a merchant who visited Muscovy several times. He was an appointed member of the Muscovite Company, a trade company chartered in 1555. Jenkinson won the respect of Ivan IV and was able to travel throughout the country. In his report of his first journey (1557-58), he collected a lot of geographical data and information on the manners and customs of Russians.

As already mentioned, not only merchants found their way to Russia but diplomats also traveled and reported their adventures. They were appointed by Queen Elizabeth I to negotiate with the court of Ivan IV the renewal of privileges of the Muscovite Company against commercial competitors. Thomas Randolph, conducting a diplomatic mission in 1568-69, for example, visited Moscow in the terrible times of the *oprichnina*, a special regime or system of terror established by Ivan in the early 1660s. From a professional point of view, in his short text, he carefully documented ceremonial practices in diplomatic relations on the occasion of his reception at court and the almost usual remarks on customs and manners of Russians. Unfortunately, he did not use his obvious talents for observation of matters related to the *oprichnina*. One cannot but agree with the editors' regret regarding Randolph's silence on these topics. Randolph was accompanied by George Turberville, a young poet and a future writer. Three letters to friends, which he composed in verses, mirror his negative impressions from his stay in Russia. The image he created of Muscovy, Russians, their lives, and manners was generally speaking unflattering and stereotyped.

The most important publication from an English writer on Russia up to the times of Peter the Great is "Of the Russe Commonwealth" by Giles Fletcher. Fletcher, a man of letters, traveled to Moscow during the reign of Feodor Ivanovich, the son of Ivan IV. His special task was to negotiate the preservation of exclusive rights and privileges of the English Muscovy Company menaced by the

opening of the market. During his stay, Fletcher gathered knowledge from English merchants living in Russia and valuable information from Jerome Horsey, a diplomat and adventurer, who spent several years in Russia. In his record, Fletcher discussed history and described Muscovite institutions as well as various chapters of Russian everyday life.

Horsey's memoir is the last text of the collection to be discussed here. Horsey appears as adventurous as well as dazzling and enigmatic. Due to his long stay in Russia (1573-91), his Russian knowledge, and his connections to the Muscovite court, he was well acquainted with Russian life and politics and served both Queen Elizabeth and the tsar as ambassador at the respective courts during a number of diplomatic missions. Many mandates and commissions from different patrons, including different, perhaps sometimes conflicting, loyalties were a great challenge for the preservation of credit and confidence. Horsey seemed to have failed this special challenge in his late career in Russia. He had numerous conflicts with members of the Muscovy Company and finally lost the confidence of former patrons at the Russian court, especially his most important protector Boris Godunov, brother-in-law of the tsar and high dignitary at court. In his "Travels," Horsey gave lively and complex portraits of the leading characters in Muscovy combined with anecdotes and gossip from the last years of the reign of Ivan IV up to Ivanovich. But Horsey was less systematic in his writing than Fletcher and sometimes confused facts and events, though he was not always deliberately misleading in his account.

Especially concerning the reading of Horsey's "Travels" but also regarding the remaining texts, the editors' annotations are most welcome and helpful. The editors verified or challenged the testimonies of the authors by using written records of additional primary source material or information from current research by other scholars. Their clear annotations provide necessary historical context and an adequate interpretation of the travelogues.

Although the collection along with the annotations and commentary is "only" a reprint and not a revised and updated version, the conclusions and remarks drawn from additional source material are new. This holds true also for the glossary of Russian terms, which is especially helpful for students and a broader audience not trained but interested in early modern Russian history. Today, due to the Internet and retro-digitalization, early modern texts, prints, or their later editions are more accessi-

ble than in 1968, the year of the first publication of *Rude & Barbarous Kingdom*. Even so, the collection is still of scientific and practical value thanks to the thoroughly scholarly work of the two editors.

Perhaps one could have desired an additional selected bibliography specifying some studies dealing with early English-Muscovite relations, their clear emphasis on trading and economic issues on the English side, and the more complex concerns and shifting focus due to the development of internal and international affairs on the Russian side. Yet the texts presented here provide the reader with multifaceted information and convey impressions of how the English voyagers perceived Russia and the Russians. And though their perspectives in describ-

ing Muscovy were based on different political experiences, both English and continental European verdicts attributed “rudeness” and “barbarism” to Muscovy and its population.

Note

[1]. Some insightful studies on early modern travelogues include Gabriele Scheidegger, *Perverse Abendland—barbarisches Russland: Begegnungen des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts im Schatten kultureller Missverständnisse* (Zürich: Chronos Verlag 1993); and Marshall T. Poe, “A People Born to Slavery”: *Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476-1748* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

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