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Colton, Timothy J. *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis*.
Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University
Press, 1995. Pp. xvi, 937. 75 figures, 41 maps, 15 tables,
appendices, notes, index

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relating to Italy, but there seems to have been considerable disagreement on the importance of these frequent European visitations of Asian cholera. Some have suggested that the cholera epidemics, while tragic in their immediate effects, were essentially episodic or “one off” affairs which left little trace of their passing. Others, including Asa Briggs, suggested the epidemics were much more important, “revealing a shaft of light by means of which one can explore the structure and workings of modern European society.” Naples, Snowden believes, is an ideal case study which would throw as much light on the scholarly debate as on post-*risorgimento* Italy.

His work succeeds wonderfully on many counts. Along with descriptions of the gruesome effects of cholera on the grotesquely overpopulated harbour *sezioni*, or lower Naples, an area particularly receptive (a “gracious host”, as Snowden says) to all forms of infectious diseases, Snowden shows how inexorably the tragedy of 1884 led to the crisis of 1910–11. After 1885 the slums were to have been cleared away, a great avenue built to clear out the place, new aqueducts, new sewer systems, indeed a new lower town were to have been built on the insalubrious, stinking muck that had been the old Naples. It was not to be. Community, class, and crime were not as easily eliminated as were the *fonaci* or “pits of hell”, the squatting places of, as Snowden calls them, the “urban troglodytes”. Local politics, greed and corruption defied national expectations so much that when the next (and last) cholera epidemic struck in 1910–11, Naples was scarcely better able to contain the menace than it had been in 1885. Except that with so much money spent, so many reputations on the line, including that of the national government, once Rome realized the full horror of the cholera threat to Naples, its only response was to deny and then to hide it. Incredibly, not only did the Government embark on an enormous “cover-up”, it got away with it. Snowden’s account of this crime is perhaps the most engrossing part of the book.

If Briggs’s suggestion was that the cholera epidemics be used to throw a “shaft of light” on the structure of European society, nowhere was it better or more fully realized than in Snowden’s *Naples*. Not a stone is unturned. He examines everything with a fascination which might easily, but never does, become morbid. Especially interesting is his discussion of organized crime, of the history and the biology of the disease, and, of course, of the politics of financing urban renewal. Snowden’s book is an indispensable guide to the 19th- and early 20th-century Italian history. It is also a model of historical analysis which deserves emulation.

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Colton, Timothy J. *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995. Pp. xvi, 937. 75 figures, 41 maps, 15 tables, appendices, notes, index.

Despite its subtitle, there is much more to be found in this book than simply the manner in which Moscow has been governed — important as that topic might be. Chronologically organized, it begins in the twelfth century, with the first days of the town that was most probably named for the *Moskva* river that meandered past it; it ends almost a millennium later, in the 1990s. By far the largest portion of this imposing book, however, is devoted to those years between 1917 and 1991, when Moscow served as the capital of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. In any case, given the vast scope of this project in terms of both time and topics, it is hardly surprising that its completion took more than a decade.

Timothy J. Colton is a Harvard sovietologist and director of that university’s Russian Research Centre. The research which resulted in this publication began at the University of Toronto a few years before the break-up of the USSR. During the Gorbachev ‘80s he was able to refer to archival materials that previously had been unavailable to Western scholars; then, in the post-Soviet 1990s, many more avenues of research were opened. This book is truly indicative of the diversity of those avenues, and of Colton’s journey through them.

From personal interviews to published memoirs, from newspapers to statistical surveys, from official documents to literature, Colton has made good use of them all. Furthermore, he openly admits having received invaluable input from some of the finest minds in academia, and his acknowledgments section reads like a “who’s who” of international sovietology. The list includes scholars who have also produced urban histories, but what is most significant about the roster is that it includes representatives from many different disciplines. This point not only highlights the inter-disciplinary nature of Colton’s work, but also the fact that his book should be of great interest to people outside the history departments of the world.

To put it most simply, this “city biography” contains something for almost everyone. For the social historian, to cite but one example, Colton not only paints a vivid verbal picture of the lives of Moscow’s residents, but also provides a number of interesting visual representations and useful demographic tables. For the political scientist, meanwhile, there is the discussion of the “dis-jointed monism” of Soviet government, which lies at the heart of his anti-centrist, anti-monolithic thesis. Last, but certainly not least for the urban studies specialist, Colton provides extensive details of one city’s construction, destruction and reconstruction across the years, and under the guidance of a number of leaders.

Particularly noteworthy is Colton’s analysis of the Stalinist “hyperurbanization” campaign which, as part of the crusade to construct “socialism in one country,” included a search for a style of architecture that would be truly “socialist” in both nature and

design. No less interesting, however, is Colton's appraisal of Khrushchev's hands-on form of urbanization that brought about a number of fiascos, but also resulted in the artistic marvels to be found in Moscow's subway stations. All this and more is augmented by a generous number of tables, maps, illustrations and appendices. Among the last of these is one in which Colton first explains how Soviet statisticians defined living space requirements, then tabulates the total amount of housing constructed by year from the early 1920s to the early 1990s.

In the midst of this plethora of information, one might pause to wonder why the city's experience of the Second-World-War years has been so neglected. Also, the all-encompassing nature, not to mention the length, of this "city biography" might be a bit daunting to some readers, and perhaps Colton has overdone it when it comes to what some might consider extraneous details. When all is said and done, however, there can be no doubt that both the time and the effort required to absorb the material offered by this author would be well invested by any scholar. Furthermore, the book is an essential addition to the library of any sovietologist, regardless of his or her discipline. And finally, it is most fitting that this in-depth biography of the "socialist metropolis" should have been published in the year of the Russian capital's 850th birthday. Despite its concentration on only seventy-five of those years, Colton's tome stands as a monument to that great city.

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Eliassen, Finn-Einar, and Geir Atle Ersland, eds. *Profit and Urban Land: Landownership in Medieval and Early Modern Northern European Towns*. Aldershot, Hants, England: Scolar Press, 1996. Pp. xiv, 277. Maps, tables, charts, black and white illustrations, bibliographies and index. (\$84.95 cloth).

This volume presents papers from a conference on urban landownership in medieval and early modern Northern and Eastern Europe which took place in Bergen, Norway in October 1994. In their introduction to this volume, the editors, Finn-Einar Eliassen and Geir Atle Ersland, note that "among the 'thousand flowers' of modern urban history research, some topics may still be regarded as more fundamental than others, and at least from a topographical point of view, few themes can be more fundamental than those relating to urban land — the sites on which the towns were built." (p.10) According to the editors, in the last few decades new interest has developed in patterns of landownership in Northern and Eastern Europe during the medieval and early-modern periods, so they have brought together twelve active researchers in the field — economic, social and legal historians, archaeologists, historical geographers, and urban planners — from eight different countries of the region, who have approached the subject from a variety of different angles.

A.J. Scrase (United Kingdom) reviews the continuing debate over what defines a town. Warning against relying on one or a number of limiting defining features, legal, demographic or otherwise, Scrase makes a plea for using multiple, related criteria — what he calls polythetic rather than monothetic sets of characteristics — and goes on to discuss the potential and problems of the different types of sources that are available for the historical reconstruction of British towns. In an essay on the early development of Ghent, Lübeck, and Novgorod, Rolf Hammel-Kiesow (Germany) calls for the need to address multiple issues not only in defining towns but in studying them as well. Using a variety of sources, including monastic chronicles, archaeological evidence, and plans, T.R. Slater (United Kingdom) compares towns founded by the Benedictine order in England with those established by other religious orders and secular authorities.

Economics takes center stage in a number of the papers. Derek Keene (United Kingdom) notes that the urban property market is often claimed as an invention of the modern age, but all available evidence for medieval England points to the early origin and continuity of key features of property holding: monetization of value, the capacity to reckon it as capital or income, and a high degree of spatial differentiation in value determined by demand and the frequency of exchange. Richard Rodger (United Kingdom) shows that the "feuing" system, a distinctive Scottish form of land tenure, provided property owners an annual income in perpetuity and other fees, which they could use to borrow capital to finance building and other developments. Geir Atle Ersland (Norway) discusses a form of land rent that was characteristic of many medieval and early-modern European cities, but which existed in a "pure" form in medieval Bergen: namely, that only in a small percentage of cases did house owners own the land on which their houses stood (in Bergen that figure was less than 3%). Taking off from an earlier thesis stating that the social assignment of space in pre-modern European cities dominated within a general economic context, Katalin G. Szende (Hungary) shows that in the case of Western Hungary, economic factors were as important as social ones.

The relationship between politics, landownership, and urban expansion is another key theme represented in the papers. Maria Bogucka (Poland) discusses new town formation in Poland, 1500–1650. Bogucka notes that while the role of towns in the political life of Poland was drastically circumscribed during this period due to the overwhelming dominance of the nobility, the period witnessed a growth both in the number of new towns as well as an expansion of some older ones. She argues for the need to understand this urbanization process within an urban-rural context, pointing to the fact that town dwellers were buying up rural land at time when the nobility and the clergy were involved in a massive purchase of town properties. Robert Sandberg (Sweden) and Finn-Einar Eliassen (Norway) discuss, in two separate papers, urban expansion and landownership in early modern Sweden and Norway. In both countries, in the middle ages, the population was mostly made up of freeholder peasants and the urban network was much smaller than in other