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The new volume of Fedosov's translation of Patrick Gordon

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The new volume of Fedosov's translation of Patrick Gordon

Patrik Gordon. *Dnevnik 1690-1695*. Perevod s angliiskogo, stat'ia i primechaniia D. G. Fedosova. Moskva: Nauka, 2014. 620 pp. + ill. ISBN 978-5-02-038041-7.

Neither Patrick Gordon, Peter the Great's distinguished Scottish general, nor Dmitrii Fedosov's translation of Gordon's diary should be unfamiliar to H-EarlySlavic subscribers. Fedosov's laudatory project, now one volume short of completion, is providing the first full and accurate translation of one of the most important sources for late Muscovite history. Simultaneously, though with a deliberate delay by agreement with Nauka, the University of Aberdeen is publishing Fedosov's edition of the previously unpublished complete original English text. Five volumes of the Russian translation have appeared, and four of the diary in English <<http://www.store.abdn.ac.uk>>.

In each volume in Russian, Fedosov provides a carefully researched essay, documented in the first instance from Gordon, which contextualizes and highlights the information it contains. The notes to the Russian edition are extensive, identifying individuals mentioned in the text, explaining abbreviations, and here including translations of the several letters Gordon wrote in Latin (and one in German). There are indexes of personal and geographical names.

This volume of Gordon's diary is a rich one, for what it tells us about the training of Peter's new regiments in the first years after the overthrow of Sophia's government, for the detailed descriptions of Gordon's journey to Arkhangel'sk in 1694 and participation in Peter's White Sea adventure that year, and for its uniquely thorough account of the first Azov campaign in 1695. He is often obsessive about exact detail (e.g., listing everything in a shipment of supplies down to the single turkey). He includes such things as copies of payment records, his calculations regarding the materials needed to build a bridge across the Don for the 1696 campaign against Azov, and the instructions as to how that was to be done. Those interested in Muscovite medical history will find a lot here on disease and its treatment.

Gordon kept a separate letter book with copies of his vast correspondence. While that book as such has not survived, this volume of the diary in fact contains more than 100 of the letters he wrote, appended to each of the first two years and then scattered through the remainder. For my immediate interests, what we can learn from the diary about the post and the often indirect channels through which communication passed is extremely valuable, as Gordon recorded to whom he wrote, from whom he received letters, and their dates. While some of the correspondence simply went through "the post," commonly he enclosed letters to trusted correspondents or couriers who then forwarded or delivered them to the addressee. We have

letters to his relatives in Scotland, to Hetman Mazepa, to Father Schmidt in Braunsberg, where Gordon sent his son Teodor to study, to Johann Kurts in Vienna....

The diary is revealing about Gordon's devotion to his family, his financial interests, his deep Roman Catholic faith, his passionate royalist support for the deposed King James II. When Tsar Peter called, Gordon jumped to obey, even if it was in the middle of the night, as was often the case. He had daily access to the Tsar and met him socially as he did most of the luminaries of the Foreign Suburb of Moscow and a good many of the prominent figures in the Muscovite government to whom he dutifully wrote at the same time when he was writing to his wife and daughter if away from home. Gordon frequently attended weddings, was godfather to newly baptized infants, and experienced the realities of the often abrupt deaths both of colleagues and members of his family. Infant deaths from disease were common. How Gordon himself survived to live into his 60s is something of a miracle. Quite apart from the dangers of military maneuvers with live ammunition, he was on the front lines in battle. While he seems to have had a bottomless reserve of energy and health on campaign, his life in Moscow and its environs increasingly was interrupted by bouts of ill health, some of it undoubtedly brought on by the all-night revels in which he was forced to participate.

We are in Dmitrii Fedosov's debt for the fact that we no longer will have to rely on Posselt's old partial and inaccurate translation of the diary into German, Maikov's translation from it into Russian, or the old and greatly condensed publication of excerpts from Gordon's original English text.