Simon Dixon's review of my Peter the Great: the Struggle for Power is so generous that a response in the usual sense of the word would be churlish. In place of that response I offer a few further reflections and clarifications.

Professor Dixon is right that I avoided current historiographic debates, perhaps to excess, for they seem to me increasingly noisy and unproductive. The historiography of older Russian history, however, has its own problems, different from those of the literature of the Soviet and pre-revolutionary eras. It is not the imposition of contemporary political debates on the past that is the obstacle, rather it is the persistence of a picture of the Russian past derived from long-dead modes of analysis. This is my point about the Russian state and the 'state school' of Boris Chicherin and S. M. Solov'ev. They understood Russian history as the growth of Statehood (gosudarsvennost' /Staatstum), the principle of the state understood in Hegelian terms. In practice this notion meant that historians were to study formal institutions and their legal basis, and worry about whether the boyar duma was a House of Lords or not. For reasons unique to Russian history, their impact has lasted far beyond the original impulse, indeed up to the present day. Most of the existing literature on the state that laid down the factual picture that we accept was the product of the state school or its immediate successors. The last general study of provincial administration in the seventeenth century was Chicherin's, the last largescale work on the same subject in Peter's time that of M. M. Bogoslovskii (1902). The Senate was last examined by S. A. Petrovskii (1875) and the authors of the 1911 official history. We still rely for information on taxation and finance on P. N. Miliukov (1905), while E. V. Anisimov's 1982 study of the soul tax, exemplary as it is, examines only one aspect of the problem. Claes Peterson's 1979 work on the Colleges is also foundational, but mainly concerns their formation, and formal mode of operation. The bibliography and notes to Anisimov's 1997 survey of state institutions prove this point: only in a few cases is there literature from the Soviet era on the state, and however active Russian and Western historians have been since 1991, it is too soon for much of the ground to be cleared. In the Soviet era the state was just not important enough - compared to agrarian history, class struggle, and economic history - to attract much attention.

By accident of fate historians in the West also followed the state school in concentrating on formal institutions of the earlier Russian state, rather than the people who ran them. In part this was the result of the importation of Russian historical ideas through emigration. Then in the West, not just the Anglo-Saxon world, the fascination with American social science in the 1950s and early 1960s produced a whole series of studies that merely reinforced the assumptions of the state school: formal bureaucratic organization and the legal basis of social organization is the key to understanding. Afterwards social history came along and the state was largely abandoned for several decades, only to re-enter through the back door by way of studies of the boyar elite, the work which formed the foundation of my own.

In short, the ideas of the state school are long dead, but for the period up to about 1800 we are left with the factual picture which they created. What they thought was important has been studied, and in the way they approved, and there was little interest before 1917 in what they did not think was important. Soviet surveys of Russian history relied on the data accumulated by their predecessors in areas like the state, and thus bequeathed to the current generation what are actually old interpretations encased in a supposedly neutral factual picture. I am not alone in making this observation, for recently A. B. Kamenskii and other Russian colleagues have noted the phenomenon. Such a situation does not exist in the historiography of any other major European country, and it complicates the task of any historian of Russia. We can only hope that the
speed of publication of both sources and new research in Russia itself will render the problem obsolete in the
decades to come.

I can only welcome Professor Dixon's comments about my attempts to provide a new picture of events. In
the process of work it became clear that there was a great deal left to be uncovered, and there were many
episodes and aspects of the period which I could only mention and not describe in any detail. One of them is
women. I am quite aware of the work of Lindsey Hughes and the few others who have dealt with women at
the court in these centuries, but I am mainly impressed with what remains unknown. In trying to work out
the court factions of the 1670s I stumbled across tsarevna Irina Mikhailovna (the sister of tsar Aleksei),
obviously a major political figure. What struck me was that there is absolutely no reference to her in the
literature outside of the context of the marriage negotiations of 1642-5 with Denmark, in which she had - it
seems - no personal role whatever. If I could find a woman with political power before Sofia without looking
for one, what else is waiting in the sources of the seventeenth century?

The eighteenth century presents another series of related dilemmas. What about Catherine I, usually
dismissed in the literature as weak and dominated by Menshikov in her short reign? It is obvious that she
played a major role in Peter's time, which I had space only to outline. Do we have her reign right? The last
studies are again over a century old. And why are almost all the rulers of the eighteenth century women?
Especially since all of them, without exception, were put on the throne by a coup d'etat of male courtiers and
the guards regiments? Most, perhaps all, were not weak rulers and they were very well known to their
sponsors and supporters before the various coups. The Orlovs and the guards did not put on the throne a
woman they thought easily manipulated, only to find out the opposite. They knew what they were doing.
The story of Irina and Sofia suggests to me that we had better suspend judgment before we pronounce
women irrelevant to politics before Sofia. And we had better look again at the eighteenth century.

Two other issues left me wondering. The All-Drunken Council did not get much attention in the book in part
because both Lindsey Hughes and Ernest Zitser have been working through the records with much success,
but also because I am not sure what to make of it. Is it really a case of archaic practices surviving into Peter's
time, as Professor Dixon suggests? It seems to me rather another Western import, but with some Russian
features such as the celebration of sviatki, the days of revelry between Chrismas and Epiphany (Reinhard
Wittram had the same impression). It tells us a great deal about Peter's personality and culture, but its
political role is much less clear. Its members are either unimportant (the third Apraksin brother) or had
plenty of access to the tsar in other forms (Zotov). It does not figure in diplomatic accounts of court politics,
though it does play a major role in such reports on Peter himself or the more general life of the court.

Dixon is also right that I neglect the last years of Peter's reign, after about 1718. In part the reason (other
than personal exhaustion) was that much of the literature on Peter's reforms (the soul tax, local
administration, the colleges) covered the years 1718-25 more fully than usual, and for once some of the more
interesting diplomatic sources (Campredon's reports) are published. The other reason is that it seems to me,
only intuitively, that the last years of Peter's reign form the beginning of another period, starting in 1718 or
1721. By then the major effort of Europeanization was over, the experiments in government had largely
come to an end with the establishment of structures that last, more or less, to the end of the century, and the
configuration of factions at court had stabilized. It might be more productive to see the last years together
with the period from Peter's death to Anna's restoration of autocracy as a single period, one that saw a
struggle for power within the new institutional, and to some extent social, forms.

Finally, I am grateful for Professor Dixon's interest and intelligent reaction to my use of diplomatic material.
Unfortunately it is hard to find such sensitivity to source problems outside of 'old Europe'. I would like to
add only one note about Sir James Harris and his views of Catherine. My guess would be that he reflected
his sources at court, and repeated the prejudices of the opposition. Shcherbatov's criticism of Catherine was
primarily that, as a woman, she let herself be dominated by male favorites, a highly improbable view but
clearly widespread. Or perhaps the problem was just Harris's stupidity, a human failing which the historian
cannot avoid in others any more than in himself.