

## LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

I should like to use the columns of the *Slavic Review* to urge every department, program, and institute in the Russian and East European field to require every one of its graduate students to acquire command of French and German, as well as of the Slavic and other languages of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe necessary for effective teaching and instruction in the Slavic and East European field.

Most of us, young and old alike, have grown up in a country in which knowledge of languages of other peoples is exotic. Generally, we have learned the necessary Slavic and other languages so late in our training that few have acquired mastery of French and German, both of which are absolutely essential for anyone serious about scholarship and effective teaching about the Slavic and East European world. I am often distressed to note that the author of an otherwise excellent book by an American scholar was utterly ignorant of both primary and secondary sources essential for his work because they were published in French or German. This makes our scholarship parochial in an ever shrinking world and is frankly disgraceful.

I write now because of a review in the *American Historical Review*, 87, no. 4 (October 1982): 1079, by Professor Hans Torke of the Freie Universität of Berlin, an able German scholar. Torke has taught and carried on research in the United States, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe. He knows English and French and other Western languages as well as Russian and other Slavic languages necessary for research in our field. He wrote in the review that he had "once pledged not to review any more American books whose authors totally disregard German-language publications on their subjects" because "simply too many American scholars seem to be convinced that the study of Russian history is possible without the knowledge of German (or French)." He noted that he had written that review of an otherwise excellent book largely to emphasize that the young author had totally ignored literature in German and had therefore completed a flawed volume.

This shortcoming is our responsibility, not that of the government. Few of us engaged in research and instruction in this field require those we help train to master these essential languages. We should simply raise our standards, require command of French and German, and end this disgrace in our scholarship.

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TO THE EDITOR:

I read with interest the exchange between Prof. Demitri Shimkin and Academician Julian Bromlei (*Slavic Review*, 41, no. 4 [Winter 1982]: 692–99). Unfortunately, neither mentioned an element that must be present in far greater quantity before there can really be an intellectual dialogue between Soviet and Western anthropologists. Neither the establishment of a common corpus of ethnographic information, nor the restatement of hypotheses, nor the pursuit of joint research, nor a discussion of the place of anthropology in the social science spectrum in the Soviet Union and the West can be accomplished without a greatly increased program of translation from Russian and other Soviet languages into English.

It is unfortunate that when Columbia University Press published *Soviet and Western Anthropology*, Tamara Dragadze's stimulating report of the conference (published in *Current Anthropology*, 19, no. 1 [March 1978]: 119–28) was not included. Many of the articles cited in *Soviet and Western Anthropology* have been translated into English in the journals *Soviet Anthropology and Archeology* and *Soviet Sociology*. As a potential teaching tool, the body of literature in these two journals is significant, including a

discussion by Soviet scholars of Bromlei's original article, "Etnos i etnografiia," and in general they give a pretty fair profile of the place of Soviet ethnography in the spectrum of Soviet social sciences.

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TO THE EDITOR:

Robert Thurston's review (*Slavic Review*, 41, no. 3 [Fall 1982]: 549–51) concludes that my book *The Cheka: Lenin's Political Police* "suffers from a narrow focus, and remains largely unsatisfactory"; yet his own narrow concern, concentrated exclusively on a single aspect of my extensive study, is to minimize Lenin's responsibility for the *start* of Bolshevik terror, disregarding the systematic terror practiced after mid-1918.

Thurston grotesquely distorts my presentation of events. From my statement (on p. 85) that, in summer 1918, District Chekas operated in only 75 districts, he deduces that "the overwhelming bulk of [Bolshevik] territory still had no local political police"; he inexplicably omits my mention (*ibid.*) of the existence of thirty-eight Provincial Chekas, the key regional network which covered all Soviet-controlled territory and continued to function effectively after the abolition of District Chekas in January 1919. Thurston considers this alleged "low-level of Cheka penetration of Russia" to be "incomprehensible . . . if the political police already had the great importance to the new regime and its efforts to govern that Leggett would have us believe." But I did not argue anything of the sort; indeed, I pointed out that "up to early July 1918 the Vecheka . . . was still in the process of construction and expansion . . . [possessing] limited resources" (p. 67). I stressed that Lenin, when he seized power, had no thought of resurrecting the political police; the Cheka evolved naturally as the indispensable instrument of coercion required by Lenin's single-party state in the face of socialist opposition, bourgeois hostility, and massive peasant rebellion.

The modest extent of Bolshevik terror and Cheka growth prior to Lenin's suppression, in July 1918, of the insurgent Left Socialist Revolutionaries (whose presence in the Cheka Collegium had hitherto restrained terror) does not, however, disprove either the political repression practiced by Lenin since October 1917 or his early advocacy of terror. Lenin's views in 1917 on the need for violence in the socialist revolution were by no means as "relatively mild" as Thurston suggests. In *The State and Revolution*, written in August–September 1917, Lenin characterized his envisaged proletarian state as "the centralized organisation of force, the organisation of violence, for the purpose of crushing the resistance of the exploiters," and in December 1917 he wrote: "We Marxists . . . always knew . . . that socialism cannot be 'introduced,' that it emerges in the course of the most tense, the most sharp — to the point of frenzy and despair — class struggle and civil war." Lenin's early absorption of French and Russian Jacobin influences, emphasizing terror as a means of consolidating revolution, must be well known to Thurston.

Terror became a way of life with Lenin. Those who extenuate and minimize his recourse to it should not forget that in May 1922 Lenin wrote to Kurskii, his commissar for justice: "The law should not abolish terror: to promise that would be self-delusion and deception; it should be substantiated and legalized in principle, clearly, without evasion or embellishment." Lenin, for his part, did not equivocate on this issue.

Unfortunately I lack the space to deal with all of Thurston's arguments. The several "difficult questions" which he raises and accuses me of avoiding are mostly misconceived or irrelevant; these "difficulties" are of his own devising.

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