

hensive will disinform, subtly or otherwise, any reader of the English language sufficiently advanced to find his way to the articles in question.

It must be acknowledged—and the editors of the *Britannica* have never failed to do so in the 208-year history of the work—that no encyclopaedia or its editors are infallible. Errors have occurred. Linguistic ones like those to which Professor Misiunas and others have pointed have been corrected. There have been a few indexing errors, mainly of omission, some of which affecting entries of which Professor Misiunas is critical. These, too, have been corrected wherever they have been identified. The inevitability of errors was carefully considered during the design of the new *Britannica*, and a system for the most timely and accurate correction of errors was built into the plans for the set and for its periodic updating of perishable statistics and treatment of major new developments of far-reaching significance.

Criticism of the *Britannica* is also inevitable, and its editors and friends cannot object to being taken to task for shortcomings or being differed with over the practicality or quality of its editorial design and execution, and they must expect that some will simply not like the set. Professor Misiunas clearly feels that the fifteen republic (geography) articles do not meet his standards for political interpretation, but this hardly entitles him to declare that they therefore fall short of the editors' own standards for something entirely different. Such a declaration smacks all too much of what Professor Misiunas might call "subtle disinformation."

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Professor Misiunas does not think it necessary to reply.

TO THE EDITOR:

S. P. Melgunov's book, *The Bolshevik Seizure of Power*, has been highly valued by a number of historians of the period. By contrast, Professor A. Rabinowitch in his review in the *Slavic Review* (June 1975, p. 396) finds that "many problems absolutely crucial to an understanding of the Bolsheviks' success are not touched on at all. One learns very little, for example, about the aspirations and behavior of Petrograd workers, soldiers, and sailors who supported transfer of power to the soviets. . . ." This statement contains two major misunderstandings.

First, a transfer of power to the soviets never occurred in fact. To be sure, the slogan "all power to the soviets" was popular among Petrograd workers and soldiers before the October coup. What they had in mind was the power of councils freely elected by the population. What Lenin had in mind, and what actually occurred, was a transfer of power to his party, with the soviets used as a smoke-screen: "To wait for the Congress of Soviets is idiocy" he wrote in demanding an immediate seizure of power (p. 7). Professor Rabinowitch rebukes me for "dismissing" the Second Congress of Soviets as a "crowd dominated by Bolshevik cheer-leaders." This assessment, however, follows that of the Executive Committee of the First Congress of Soviets, composed of Menshevik Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries. It also reflects the Bolsheviks' own admissions of the highly irregular election and work procedures of the Congress (pp. 82–83). Moreover, I suspect Lenin himself was of the same opinion. Instead of retaining the

Congress in Petrograd for several weeks or months to support the new government in establishing a new political and social order, he immediately sent its members home, after they "legitimized" his power. Evidently, he considered the assemblage quite useless for any constructive work.

The second misunderstanding concerns the Petrograd workers' and soldiers' alleged support for the October coup. Their "behavior" on October 25 is shown very clearly by Melgunov. The bulk of the Petrograd workers remained in the factories doing their usual work, and nearly all soldiers remained in their barracks, doing nothing. The Winter Palace, the site of Kerensky's government, was not a fortress, but merely a huge building guarded by a few hundred military cadets and patriotic young women in soldiers' uniforms. Any one of the many Petrograd regiments was able to take the building easily, but no regiment came. Only a group of some 300 soldiers from the Pavlovsky regiment arrived with the intent of supporting Lenin's plans. Considering that the Petrograd garrison numbered more than 100,000 at that time, the active Leninists were 0.3 percent of the soldiers. The "red guard" groups of workers were small and weak, and so Lenin's armed forces helplessly "besieged" the Winter Palace for a whole day (in spite of Lenin's repeated angry orders to take it) until finally at night a detachment of 3,000 Baltic sailors arriving from Kronstadt completed the "Great October Socialist Revolution." The Bolsheviks won because they met no serious resistance. To use an apocryphal quotation, power was lying in the streets and they picked it up.

The broader issue as to why the resistance was so weak is explicitly beyond the narrowly defined subject of Melgunov's book (p. 3). It is dealt with briefly in the editor's introduction. The chief value of the book is that it introduces essential corrections into the constructs of official Soviet historiography which, unfortunately, continue to be taken at face value by certain Western historians.

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PROFESSOR RABINOWITCH REPLIES:

I regret that Professor Pushkarev concludes that I do not consider Melgunov's study of value. In my brief review, I tried to identify the book's virtues as well as its limitations.

Space does not permit me to comment meaningfully on the many important issues touched on in Professor Pushkarev's letter. However, I cannot but note that the misunderstandings outlined by Mr. Pushkarev seem to me to bear little relation either to what I said in the review or, more fundamentally, to my thinking in regard to the development of the revolution in Petrograd.

TO THE EDITOR:

I cannot help feeling that Professor Nemeč in his enthusiastic review of Jan Ciechanowski, *The Warsaw Rising* (*Slavic Review*, June 1975, pp. 416-17) failed to grasp or at least clearly to convey to the reader the highly controversial nature of this book. Expressions such as "it corrects several previous biased versions" and "can be read with confidence" outweigh the remark that the author "has a