

## LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

Robert Kann's review of my *History of Middle Europe* (*Slavic Review*, September 1977, pp. 513–14) is bizarre as well as misleading.

Dr. Kann censures me for using the term "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" although he himself uses the same nomenclature in his *Multinational Empire* (1950, vol. 2, pp. 219 and 366) and in his *Habsburg Empire* (1973, pp. 4 and 222). He criticizes my reference to the Germany of 1871 as a "multinational empire," even though this Hohenzollern Reich was inhabited not only by Germans but also by blocs of Frenchmen, Belgians, Danes, Poles, Wends, and so forth. He expresses indignation because I classify the Hohenstaufen Frederick II as a "proto-Nazi." For Frederick's proto-Nazi credentials (which include attacks on the three monotheistic religions, racism, and a Bull rendering Bohemia a member-appendage of the Reich) see E. Kantorowitz's 1927 and G. Masson's 1957 biographies, as well as N. F. Cantor's 1969 *Medieval History*, pp. 483–84 (where Frederick II appears as an "intellectual Fascist" idolized by the Nazis). Dr. Kann deprecates my reference to Charles Colbert as Louis XIV's foreign minister. Nothing prevented me from using the right French title (*Secrétaire d'Etat aux Affaires Etrangères*) except my anxiety to communicate intelligibly with the English-speaking reader. (Do we refer to M. Raymond Barre as prime minister or by his correct title of *Président du Conseil*?) Dr. Kann notes that the Austrian Parliament was adjourned in 1914–17 but does not say how government was carried on. What I contend on page 207 of my book is that most Socialists in the Central Powers supported the home establishments' war effort until defeat became a probability. If Dr. Kann disagrees, he should say so.

A reviewer's functions include noting, approving, rejecting, or emending theses, theories, and hypotheses presented in a new book. Dr. Kann does none of these things in his review of my *History of Middle Europe*, even though the book invites scholarly debate on such propositions as the operations of north-south and east-west migration axes in Eurasia; the effects of an unceasing succession of controlling empires on the evolution of normative dependence, collaboration, and resistance; the socioeconomic consequences in the middle zone of the dying crusades and Western urbanization; the sociological continuum of pagan, heretics', serfs', and agro-proletarian revolts; the influence of Ottoman occupation on Protestant survival; the intrusion of the Gypsy subculture; middle-zone stimuli to the rise of Zionism, and so forth. Since Dr. Kann completely ignores these historical problems, which form the thematic backbone of my book, I feel justified in asking whether he has read through *A History of Middle Europe* or simply sampled it, staying away as much as he thought possible from facts and interpretations beyond his ken and competence, as a specialist in the Aztec Empire might do in reviewing a book on Latin America.

I find it inexcusable that a new historical work of value should be aborted by a narrowly specialized reviewer who is uninformed about the wider area he was asked to survey. Permit me, therefore, to suggest that, instead of accepting Dr. Kann's unjustifiably perjorative evaluation of my *History of Middle Europe*, the editors of *Slavic Review* submit my book to a simple test capable of being administered by any intelligent reader. Does it or does it not present new facts, interpretations, and theories which advance our understanding of the role played by Middle Europeans in history beyond the highly respectable limits reached in such outstanding recent monographs as R. R. Palmer's *World of the French Revolution* (1971), H. J. Hillerbrand's *World of the Reformation* (1973), and E. J. Hobsbawm's *Age of Capital* (1975)? The answer should be easily predictable.

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