

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

In Anthony Netting's interesting article, "Images and Ideas in Russian Peasant Art," in the March 1976 issue, we are told that the peasants in a way "shared Shelley's vision: Life, like a dome of many-colored glass, / Stains the white radiance of infinity." "Infinity" should read "Eternity." We can't get the peasants right until we get Shelley right.

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TO THE EDITOR:

I was enormously disturbed by George F. Kennan's petulant dismissal of Professor C. Ben Wright's "Mr. 'X' and Containment," in the March 1976 issue of the *Slavic Review*. Noting that his reply to a question at an Air War College lecture in 1947 did not mention "preventive war," Kennan uses this to prove that Wright distorted Kennan's general position by incorporating portions of his statements over many years into Wright's falsely rendered interpretation of them. At the Air War College, however, Kennan did say that an atomic attack on Russia could be made "without great loss of life," or American prestige. Does this not mean preventive war?

Wright may have distorted Kennan's exact meanings in various places but there can be no question that his critique of Kennan brilliantly captures the essence of U.S. cold war policy. This has led us from the futility of "containment" (offspring of *Cordon Sanitaire* and Appeasement) through the nightmare of Vietnam to the delusion of Détente replete with Gerald Ford's October 6, 1976 emancipation proclamation of Poland and Rumania.

The truth is that our first line of defense against the powerful appeal of Leninism among the world's prisoners of starvation has been Wilsonian Utopianism (usually called idealism) aided by strong-man marionettes where expedient, while our second line has been, and is, the threat of nuclear war. These, taken together, spell "containment." Mr. Kennan should be big enough to acknowledge that both he and the American people as a whole have so far failed to devise an effective plan for "keeping the world safe for democracy"—whatever that may mean. At the same time, Kennan's dismissal of Professor Wright as a kind of ignorant pup makes a negative contribution to our foreign policy dilemma of which Kennan himself is more the symbol than the source.

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