

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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I would like to comment on John Litwack's review of my book *Economic Reforms in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe since the 1960s* [*Slavic Review* 49 (Summer 1990)] for two reasons. First, I feel that reviewers of books on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, written before the collapse of the socialist system in Eastern Europe, are confronted with a dilemma: to evaluate the books strictly from the viewpoint of the present situation or from that of the situation that existed when the book was written? In my opinion to evaluate books from the former viewpoint is ahistoric. Second, I feel that Litwack's criticism is unjustified in many aspects.

My book was finished at the end of 1987 and appeared on the market in December 1988. Nevertheless, the reviewer criticizes me for not discussing "the extremely important problems in the monetary policy and in the control of money supply." These problems are very important when discussing the transition to market economy. Monetary policy, as it is known in the west, was not part of the traditional system for obvious reasons. The same is true about the Hungarian new economic mechanism. The importance of monetary policy was first stressed in the second half of the 1980s in Hungary but had no instant effect on economic policy. For the same reason monetary policy, especially control of money supply, is seldom mentioned in textbooks (see most recent textbooks by A. Nove and P. R. Gregory and R. C. Stuart).

The reviewer also complains that I do not show that planning, regulation, and organizational systems "are closely intertwined." Apparently many of my statements have escaped the attention of the reviewer. For instance on p. 11, I write "the regulation system, as a result of its function, must be intertwined with the planning system. In some areas they coalesce to the extent that it is difficult to draw a line between the two." "The function of the organisation system is to serve the planning system. . . . Once it is established, the organisation system has a quasi life of its own and may influence the whole management system" (p. 14).

The same holds true for his criticism of the lack of criteria for the evaluation of the reform. On p. 5 I write: "I will use Brus' and Antal's classification for evaluating reforms" and make clear what their classifications are.

Had the reviewer read my book with greater attention, he could not have written "one often gets the feeling that the author implicitly equates success only with the reduction of central planning directives."

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