

EDITORIAL NOTE

From the middle of 1960 to the end of 1964 and from November 1968 to the present, for a total of about eleven years, I have served as editor of this journal; Leila Charbonneau has exactly equaled my length of service, first as editorial assistant and since 1971 as associate editor. During that period we have observed many changes in the make-up of the scholarly community concerned with Soviet and East European studies in this country and abroad and substantial alteration in political conditions within the countries studied and in international relations. In certain respects the changes have been favorable to scholarship. We have published some book reviews by Soviet colleagues and many by those in certain East European countries. We have obtained review copies of scholarly works quite regularly from much of Eastern Europe. Despite every conceivable effort to do the same from the USSR, we continue to operate on a makeshift arrangement whereby certain Soviet librarians kindly undertake to obtain for us copies of books specified. Reviewing of books published in the USSR and Eastern Europe has actually proceeded much farther than it could have done on the basis of the review copies obtained here, because of the service of our panel of consultants who advise us on which books to review and because of the valiant efforts of reviewers to secure copies of such books for themselves through purchase or library borrowing. Our efforts in this connection have not been uniformly rewarded, partly because of a few cases in which consultants have simply not functioned despite numerous reminders and queries, and in one or two instances have been replaced. In this and other respects my successor, James R. Millar, will have the opportunity to improve on our performance.

With regard to quality of manuscripts submitted, it is our impression that it is considerably higher in 1975 than in 1960. Much has been learned by the previous generation or two of scholars, much has been published, and if the excitement of breaking new ground has become less frequent, the egregious errors have diminished and the level of nuance, balance, and sophistication has risen in certain disciplines and fields. As the original Russian émigré scholars have died and many of the East Europeans have aged, young Americans have appeared in their stead—it would not do to say “replaced them,” for those two groups possessed irreplaceable assets of experience and knowledge. In originality and insight, however, the new generation is not inferior to the old.

There are areas in which things have become more difficult. During the period 1961–64 we commissioned a series of Discussion sections—each consisting of at least four separate essays with three distinct deadlines—that appeared in every issue in accordance with a previously prepared plan for all four years. A single default would have thrown this whole plan into disarray. Not a single one occurred, though many letters and phone calls were needed to meet the deadlines involved. Since 1968 the aim was not to run a Discussion section in each issue, but to include one in two or three issues per year. That aim has not been achieved, simply because person after person defaulted on firm commitments made well in advance or was unable to translate initial interest into such commitment. Several Discussion sections have had to be abandoned altogether and several others postponed as a result. Any editor would confess, at least in private, that there has never been an era in which all book reviews arrived on time. However, not merely have many more been late than was true ten years ago; in a few instances

reviewers have written to explain that they have lost the book, with no effort to apologize, replace the book, or pay for it, and no response to requests to do so; two or three years after agreeing to write reviews in three months' time, some have announced that they did not care to review the book, that their time was at a premium, that they could not be bothered. Qualified referees—in very short supply in certain fields—have declined invitations to read manuscripts, by the dozen against the occasional refusal a decade ago. Among those who have accepted, some have been late, by weeks or months, over and over again. In many cases the younger scholar, the author of a first book, the student with a bright idea, have suffered, and without any doubt thousands of dollars have been lost in salary as a result of postponement of raises or promotions for junior faculty. The way in which certain senior and distinguished persons have disregarded their freely accepted obligations in these respects has sometimes appalled me.

Occasionally there is, fortunately, a funny side. Sometimes people offer to review the same book over and over, forgetting that the first offer was accepted. Several persons write regularly to us about almost anything that comes into their heads, proposing articles and reviews, or sending manuscripts. A few of our colleagues seldom if ever answer any letters at all, and are skillful at evading phone calls, as well as somehow finding others who sign receipts when we use the mail's "return receipt requested" service, without responding to the missives that have been signed for. Some secretaries never forward mail abroad, even when the matter is urgent; some then courteously advise that they are holding the piece for Professor Z's return on such-and-such date, but others simply pile it on top of the stack, and much later we receive letters filled with anger, not at us but at the person's own secretary, as well as with frustration that the article or review will always carry an error or infelicity it would have taken five minutes to repair at the right moment. Some colleagues do not speak to other colleagues, and the proper intermediaries must be found. I see no reason to believe that the Soviet and East European field is notably different, in any of these respects, from any other, but these are some features of our field.

On the other hand, many, many scholars in several countries have responded promptly and helpfully when positively, politely when negatively, to our endless requests for assistance. The truly superb referee's report, containing a gentle yet firm description of shortcomings and a straightforward and encouraging outline of how to correct them, makes an editor's day. The review that dismantles pedantic pretense and scholarly obfuscation but leaves visible the genuine achievement of a book revives a flagging faith that it is all somehow worth the candle. The person who in one letter has lost his temper and then in a second has been brought to think better of it—in relation to an editor, referee, reviewer, or someone else—is a refreshing reminder of what we all may do under pressure and why second thoughts are useful.

Of course, 1975 is not 1960, as all American professors know even if they have not experienced all of the intervening fifteen years in that capacity or even as university students. The fluctuations of the economy have pushed up salaries, perhaps not as fast as sugar or gasoline prices, book prices, faster than acquisitions funds for libraries, and publishing costs, to a point where subsidies may be needed that the author does not have and cannot secure. And yet whole departments exist where there were none of the kind in the colleges concerned, whole bookshelves are filled with works dealing with subjects not long ago almost unknown,

and specialized knowledge abounds on subfields in Soviet and East European studies that scarcely had a name. Where there were hundreds in our field, there are thousands.

As in other fields, the tasks are not evenly distributed, and the burdens some carry are immense. It takes years to learn how to carry manifold responsibilities, and during the same period they accumulate at a dizzying rate. When a person says he is "busy," nowadays, one scarcely knows what to make of the statement. He may be fully occupied with matters that lead him to neglect his students and substitute nonbooks for books if he still continues to publish. Or he may just not work very hard and like vacations. Or he may be struggling against inconceivable odds to discharge a range of important duties and still respond to anyone who needs what he alone may be able to give. In this last category let me mention four names of friends and colleagues, now dead, who were never too busy—though they might be doing several persons' work—to help when really needed: Oswald Backus, Merle Fainsod, Philip Mosely, Henry Roberts. Sometimes I wonder if the dedication they had to scholarship is matched by many who survive them; and then I think of living examples, though it would be gratuitous to mention names. Among the middle generation and the one still younger, there are people who care, and people well enough organized to serve the field. May they grow and flourish.

I believe that the *Review* has many accomplishments to its credit since the AAASS ceased to be a paper corporation and became a membership organization. It is not for me to say what they have been, but I might enter a few tentative claims which others can best judge, and after some lapse of time. The journal may have made it easier than it might otherwise have been for people in different disciplines and specializing in different periods and areas to talk to each other, to hesitate before taking refuge in their lack of expertness when asked to judge how effective, judicious, and thoughtful contributions by colleagues may be, to acknowledge a common purpose and a shared quantum of criteria and standards for what they are doing. We may have made some headway in efforts to set aside political dogma and to concentrate on sharing knowledge and understanding across a series of frontiers, some made seemingly almost impassable by governmental, ideological, ethnic, religious, and other conflicts and the memories thereof. The *Review* may have made possible in certain instances the exchange of opinions that are pointed and judgments which are uncompromising—whether or not always right—without necessarily increasing personal or group antagonisms.

In respect to all these claims, of course success has not been uniform or complete. We have always insisted that personal remarks be removed from articles, reviews, or letters, in those relatively rare cases when they found their way in, but we have never arrogated to ourselves the right to rewrite in the tone or with the nuances that we might prefer to what our contributors have written. There is only one book review that in retrospect I wish we had not commissioned or published; perhaps if I knew more areas intimately I would broaden my regrets. We have rejected things later published elsewhere, and a full tabulation of such items over the years would be lengthy. I doubt if the weaknesses of the *Review* have lain mainly in our decisions to accept this or reject that; rather, they have been in what we have failed to persuade people to write or have not managed to induce people to send to us rather than other outlets. Probably we could all draw up lists of articles, with authors' names, which if written would be superb, but have not been written and may never be.

Under my successor, James Millar, some opportunities seemingly lost to us will recur—if experience is any guide—and other challenges will appear, other vistas will open; first-rate young people will be discovered—the most satisfying single event in an editor's experience—and a whole series of competent people who sometimes plod and sometimes soar will, as before, give the *Review* something to publish and its readers something to think about. Sometimes interesting ideas take time to realize. A case in point is the symposium on neo-serfdom in this issue. It was actually planned by Henry Roberts eight years ago. He had two different conceptions of how to organize and publish it, and we have had three. All but the fifth successively collapsed; one person died, another had an automobile accident, and so on and so forth. There is much, much more of the story, which made us wonder at times whether an unlucky star hovered over the whole venture. But it at last materialized, and it ought to have lasting usefulness.

I must finally thank those without whom the *Review* could not have achieved what it did. Our associate editor, Leila Charbonneau, has been so nearly my right arm that thanking her seems to skirt the process of thanking myself; she has combined mature judgment on major issues with an uncompromising demand for perfection on minor ones and minutiae. She was never willing to settle for less than the best, whether the question was one of scholarly excellence, extrascholarly implications, tone, style, or accuracy; no job, large or small, was ever too unimportant to slight or scorn; no contributor's feelings were ever hurt if she could manage to find a way of avoiding or showing me how to avoid such a thing. I record my deep appreciation of the excellent and devoted work of Susan Zawalich, who has served as editorial assistant and then as assistant editor, working early and late, learning fast, combining a sense of humor with a quick perception of what was serious and significant; and of Irene Laverty, our beloved and valued secretary for many years who recently resigned for personal reasons. Finally, for all of the eleven years I have served, a number of my colleagues on this campus have responded innumerable times to our needs for expert assistance and counsel in a series of specialized fields; I could mention two or three dozen without difficulty, and ask their indulgence if I single out two whose services head the list in magnitude and frequency: Imre Boba and Peter F. Sugar. Literally hundreds throughout this country and abroad have helped us time and again. All of these people have enabled the *Review* to increase its achievements and reduce its mistakes; for their aid I am profoundly grateful.

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