

tionäre." Hartmut König, "Die Verschlechterung der deutsch-russischen Beziehungen 1871–1890 in der sowjetischen Geschichtsschreibung." Inge Auerbach, "Alexander von Meyendorff und das Nationalitätenproblem im Baltikum." Klaus Meyer, "Die russische Revolution von 1905 im deutschen Urteil. Überlegungen zur Änderung des 'Russlandbildes' in Deutschland." Uwe Liszkowski, "Zur Aktualisierung der Stereotype 'Die deutsche Gefahr' im russischen Neoslavismus." Albrecht Buchholtz, "Leonid Krasin und sein Verhältnis zu Deutschland." Uwe Stehr, "Entspannungspolitische Aspekte der Bundestagswahl 1972 aus sowjetischer Sicht." Schriftenverzeichnis Georg von Rauchs. Verzeichnis der bei Georg von Rauch angefertigten Dissertationen.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

In June 1975's *Slavic Review*, Professor Misiunas reviewed fifteen geography articles on the fifteen constituent republics of the Soviet Union that appear in the 15th edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and found them wanting. He criticized them on accuracy, balance, editorial sophistication and judgment, and linguistic consistency.

In the fourth category, linguistic accuracy and consistency, he pointed to a number of errors, mainly in transliteration. Virtually every one of these was set forth in Professor Misiunas's letter to the Editor of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* dated December 17, 1974. After review and confirmation over the succeeding several months, these errors were corrected in the 1976 printing, which is going, volume by volume, to press as this is written in September 1975.

The balance of Professor Misiunas's review is on shakier ground. He has looked at the fifteen articles in question as a separate entity, subjected them to his own editorial standards, and has insisted that they supply him information that other articles were designed to supply.

His fundamental fallacy is to seek political and historical perspective in articles that are essentially Baedeker-style descriptions of geography, the economy, administrative and social conditions, and cultural activities in life today in the countries considered. He even acknowledges that the articles devote most of their attention to "geography, flora, and fauna," with which "no argument can be made." Yet he insists on looking there for history.

Indeed, Professor Misiunas even concedes the existence and balance of separate history articles such as those on "Baltic States, History of," and "Russia and the Soviet Union, History of," among others. But he implies that the historical "balance" supplied by these and related articles is inadequate. The articles about the individual republics bulk less than sixty pages, in which not more than a dozen or so are devoted to material he questions. This is not "balanced" by eighty pages or more of "history of" articles that treat the subject to his relative satisfaction.

Professor Misiunas made the same fundamental error in his 1974 letter, and our Editor, Warren Preece, pointed it out to him in his reply. That 1974 letter is clearly the basis of the review; indeed 40 percent of the text of the review is lifted directly from the earlier letter.

Professor Misiunas makes a second important error in his review, in that he appears unwilling to use the *Micropaedia*, the ten "Ready Reference and Index"

volumes, before plunging into the nineteen *Macropaedia* or main text volumes. More often than not, the *Micropaedia* would either answer his question on the spot or lead him to main text material whose absence he decries. Thus, if he would stop seeking historical, political, and religious material in the geography articles, the *Micropaedia* would send him to the history articles where he could find abundant discussion of the importance of the Islamic world to the Central Asian peoples, which he erroneously declares is not mentioned (save once).

Trying to force the content of the new *Britannica's* geographical articles into his own editorial mold leads Professor Misiunas to yet another error, which unfortunately has caused much mischief by its uncritical acceptance and wide repetition. He suggests that "unqualified statements" about communal ownership, elections, and union activity distort the true state of affairs, and that various designations of the Communist Party in the country articles are "subtle disinformation." By this he appears to mean that the country articles, in identifying the Communist Party of the various republics as "the leading political organization" or "dominant political group," may mislead unwary readers into supposing that there is some other party.

Such language is used in the country articles on thirteen of the fifteen Republics, but a fair reading would not give any notion that the article implied there was another party. First, these articles must be read in the context of their subjects' status as constituent republics of the Soviet Union. Both the Soviet Union country article and the History article are candid about the role of the Communist Party. The former (volume 17, page 349) speaks of "The political organization of Soviet society—that is the system of state organizations and mass public organizations, as guided by the Communist Party. . . ." At page 351, "The CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) is the leading political force of Soviet society, characterized as directing the development of all the component parts of the social mechanism. . . ." This is the context in which the several country articles on the constituent republics must be read.

It is clearly stated, again and again, that the fifteen constituent republic articles are supplementary to the substantive historical and interpretive articles such as "Russia and the Soviet Union, History of," and regional articles including "Baltic States, History of" and others.

Professor Misiunas is critical of the fact that the fifteen Soviet Republic articles were written by Soviet citizens. The major article, "Russia and the Soviet Union, History of" was written by Harvard history professor Edward Louis Keenan, Columbia history professor Marc Raeff, University of London history professor Hugh Seton-Watson, University of Vermont history professor Robert V. Daniels, and the late Merle Fainsod, who was Carl H. Pforzheimer Professor of Government at Harvard and director of the library there.

It might be added that all this attention to foreign authors, especially Communists, may properly emphasize but should not be allowed to warp the international character of the new work. Of nearly 4,300 contributors, 2,000 are U.S. residents, some 1,300 come from British Commonwealth countries, mainly the United Kingdom, and the rest are from 120-odd other nations, including 62 from the Soviet Union.

Unless the reader insists on subjecting the encyclopaedia to his own rules—an exercise not wholly unlike rewriting history—it is simply preposterous to suppose that the "subtle disinformation" about which Professor Misiunas seems appre-

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."

MORTIMER J. ADLER
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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