

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TO THE EDITOR:

Hugh Ragsdale's report (*Slavic Review* 48 [Summer 1989]: 269–271) on his work in the *Arkhiv Vneshnai Politiki Rossii* (AVPR) parallels my own somewhat later experience there in December of 1987. It may be helpful for diplomatic historians working in tsarist foreign policy to have a few further comments.

My own time there was in winter. This did not mean that the windows were kept closed to seal out noise and weather. On the contrary, my Russian colleagues must have thought it a singularly mild December (though I often shivered), and we enjoyed great draughts of cool air along with the muffled sounds from the street below. I found that it was a good idea to dodge the icy sidewalks as much as possible (ask Ivo Banać about getting a broken bone set in a Moscow hospital!) and so I walked through the underground connection passage and emerged at the Serpukhovskaia *stantsia* in the very shadow of the archives building. Other arrivals in winter should be informed, however, that the archives entrance is on the north side, and that an unmarked metal gate must be passed through in order to reach the entrance and the militia control.

Ragsdale's account of the reading room and of the condition of the documents (excellent) is perfectly correct. I agree entirely with his concern about the unavailability for readers of finding aids, though I would hasten to add that my own "minder," A. A. Nikiforov, was simply marvelous in his kindness, energy and knowledgeable helpfulness. (I must also express my appreciation to V. L. Kishichenko, director of the AVPR, and to V. A. Kashirina, who was in charge of the reading room during my visit.) Still, I would have preferred to be able to check through the catalogs myself. One cannot complain, however, when another dossier of relevant material is always out waiting on the work table.

Careful preparation is essential. Ragsdale prepared with work in the French and Austrian archives. I too had spent many months in Paris, and a good six weeks in Vienna, but very much longer ago, when I was working on my doctoral thesis, and when access to the AVPR was only a dream. More to the point was my opportunity to consult with colleagues in Finland and Denmark (especially with Emanuel Halicz of the Slavistiks Institute at Copenhagen University) from September to November 1987 and to use the excellent collection of reference and documentary materials in the Danish Royal Library. This helped to pinpoint the location of both public and private materials. The microfilmed tsarist diplomatic correspondence in the Danish State Archives (just across the garden from the Royal Library) were a most helpful introduction to Russian style and archival arrangement of these sorts of documents. Some sort of preparation along these lines is absolutely essential for the researcher going for the first time to the AVPR in Moscow.

May I conclude this brief report by quoting what I wrote to Halicz after my return to New Zealand from Moscow:

when I arrived at the archives building on Ulitsa Bolshaya Serpukhovskaya, I was immediately given forms to fill out, and even before I had finished that task the attendants brought several dossiers of documents to my table (my proposal, sent ahead through the embassy there was quite detailed). So I was able to set to work immediately, and I worked very hard and fast . . . under the close eye of Lenin and two Prince Gorchakov (portraits)! . . . I was able to work right through the dossier of secret materials related to the secret Franco-Russian treaty of March 1859. Some of these materials were published in the *Krasnyi Arkhiv* in 1938, but what I now have goes far beyond that and, in fact, requires a new examination of that set of documents. The attendants were very helpful and generous in bringing me the sort of material I requested, but part way through my time I began to sense that they were being a bit *too* helpful, that in fact they were bringing some extra peripheral material which was delaying my work . . . and I began to wonder if they were stalling me. At the end of my projected study (of Franco-Russian cooperation after the Crimean War) was the Polish insurrection of 1863, and I wondered if I would get to see those materials. At the finish, I asked bluntly if I would be able to see those dossiers for the first quarter of 1863, and was told gently but firmly that it was impossible—those materials were

not under the control of the reading room administration, and regulations forbade their transmittal to foreign researchers. They were very apologetic, *glasnost* had not reached that far, etc., but the effect was that I saw none of those materials in Moscow. I finished my work with correspondence from 1861. . . that was a disappointment, but the things I did see almost made up for it. I found that the most valuable documents were the very secret or very confidential letters sent to St. Petersburg by senior Russian diplomats like Kiselev in Paris, Brunnov in London, Budberg in Berlin, and Balabine in Vienna. Those letters were looked at by both Alexander II and Prince Gorchakov, and both of them, and especially the tsar, annotated them at the beginning and in the margins. So I could see the processes of thought and discussion which went on at the top level. . . . I was also allowed to submit an order for photocopies of certain pages (a limit of 100 pages altogether is set per researcher, and I was told that there is now a photocopy machine on the premises) of essential documents, and I am waiting now to see if they will actually come through [they did arrive finally, almost six months after the order was placed in Moscow, courtesy of the Soviet embassy in Wellington, and at a very reasonable price.]

If I was not allowed to see the 1863 Polish insurrection documents, I was allowed to see material from 1860 and 1861 which reflected the growing discontent in Poland. I suspect that one of the reasons why I did not get to see the 1863 materials was the fact that in the 1860 and 1861 materials there were references to disturbances in Poland (Kingdom Poland) and in "the Western provinces" (which I assumed to be parts of Lithuania, White Russia, and the western Ukraine). Anyway, I did get to see important 1863 Polish material when I got to Stanford. There at the Hoover Institution archives I found a good deal of Gorchakov correspondence in the Crimean War period (used by Curtiss), but more to the point, in the series Russia, Legatsiia (Stuttgart), boxes 11 and 12, I found the reports from Warsaw of Tengoborsky (a senior person at the Warsaw Diplomatic Chancery) on the current situation in Poland, sent fortnightly or oftener throughout the period from July 1862 to November 1863.

I hope that the knowledge that much of the 1863 Polish material is available to researchers at the Hoover Institution will encourage the Soviet foreign ministry to make available their own much more abundant resources for western scholars in this field. In the long run, that will be to everyone's advantage, including theirs. It appears that they are now coming to understand this.

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TO THE EDITOR:

Professor Ladis K. D. Kristof, in his review of *The Polish Dilemma: Views from Within*, ed. by Lawrence S. Graham and Maria K. Ciechocinska (*Slavic Review*, Summer 1989), has deployed a novel methodological approach which certainly merits attention. In the very first sentence he applauds the fact that the book was "not written by Polish emigrants, Poles who write for the underground press, or foreign scholars." Given such impressive credentials, the authors could not but produce, in Kristof's judgment, "an excellent book."

I appreciate Kristof's attentive scrutiny of an author's nationality or country of residence as the fundamental strategy to judge and validate his or her published work. Until now, I blithely ignored such considerations and was concerned merely with authors' expertise, with the scope and depth of the investigation they undertook, with the intellectual integrity and critical coherence of the work they published.

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