

SYMPOSIUM

RUMANIAN STUDIES: AN INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL OF THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES. Edited by *Keith Hitchins*. Leiden: E. J. Brill. Vol. 1: 1970. vii, 225 pp. Vol. 2: 1971–1972. vi, 216 pp.

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LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

Permit me a critical comment on Holger H. Herwig's article, "German Policy in the Eastern Baltic Sea in 1918: Expansion or Anti-Bolshevik Crusade?" (June 1973, pp. 339–57). The formulation itself of the German policy-dilemma—"expansion or anti-Bolshevik crusade"—is inaccurate and misleading. True, Berlin in 1918 contemplated an intervention in Russia, but the documentary evidence shows beyond reasonable doubt that it was to take place only if the collapse of Lenin's government was imminent and the pro-Allied forces were about to regain the upper hand in the country. As has been acknowledged—directly or implicitly—by other scholars (Winfried Baumgart, Konrad H. Jarausch), German policy vis-à-vis the Bolsheviks, the only Russian party unconditionally accepting the Brest-Litovsk peace, was dominated by the principle of containment and coexistence.

Failure to notice this dimension of *Ostpolitik* has serious repercussions on Herwig's analysis. The author argues that operation *Schlufstein*, which he primarily deals with, aimed not only at driving the Allies out of northern Russia but also, if not above all, at toppling Lenin's government. Herwig builds on the

fact that the Germans intended to begin the operation with the occupation of the Narva-Petrograd-Vyborg railroad and the city of Petrograd, initially even without Bolshevik consent. Yet it would be wrong to attach to such a plan an exclusively anti-Soviet character, let alone to equate it with the intended overthrow of the Bolsheviks. One does not need to be a military expert to understand that the operation in northern Russia was doomed to failure without a secure supply route by land. A German occupation of Petrograd would undoubtedly have aggravated the Bolshevik position, but Berlin became attentive to this fact following the Spa Crown Council of July 2, 1918, when the idea of coexistence and indeed cooperation with Lenin's government definitely prevailed in *Ostpolitik*, to be exemplified by the supplementary Brest treaty of August 27. (Herwig's assertion that Hintze, the state secretary in the Foreign Ministry, favored the termination of the Bolshevik rule in Russia is untenable.) Despite all reservations, Berlin definitely accepted the Bolsheviks as political partners as long as they remained in power.

Lenin's government was well aware of the political atmosphere in Berlin. In fact, it was the usually overcautious Lenin and Chicherin who in early August 1918 proposed to the Germans a joint action against the Allies in northern Russia and thereby revived the planning for operation *Schlußstein*. No doubt some German diplomats and especially the military still wished to link *Schlußstein* with anti-Bolshevik measures, but this was not the view of the top decision-makers. Not only the documents of the German Foreign Ministry but, ironically, even the evidence gathered by Herwig indicate that the Germans now contemplated *Schlußstein* only with Bolshevik consent and cooperation and definitely not as a prelude to the overthrow of the Soviet government. Thus Ludendorff agreed with *parallel* Soviet-German action against the Allies at Murmansk provided that Petrograd became the chief supply base, but he considered a "peaceful possession" of the city absolutely essential (p. 349). Since the Russian monarchists were unwilling fully to accept the Brest treaty, he deemed it necessary to negotiate with Lenin's government (p. 351). Consequently, contrary to previous intentions, Ludendorff now wished the navy to limit its operations to "demonstrations" in Kronstadt Bay. The chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Holtzendorff, did not remain adamant, as Herwig wants us to believe, but in fact revised his plan of July 6 which had envisioned naval involvement in the occupation of Kronstadt and Petrograd. Instead he now agreed to have the navy ready essentially as a stand-by force (pp. 351-52). General Hoffmann's justification of *Schlußstein* as a "precautionary action against social-revolutionary machinations" (p. 353) hardly had an anti-Bolshevik connotation: Hoffmann evidently referred to Lenin's adversaries, the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries, and their close cooperation with the Allies in northern Russia, especially at Archangel.

In the final account it was Kaiser Wilhelm who, well in line with *Ostpolitik*, in August 1918 resolved that *Schlußstein* would be executed only if the Russians asked for help or if political change in Russia (that is, the fall of the Bolsheviks) appeared imminent (p. 353). It is therefore not surprising that while rejecting outright any German assistance in driving the British out of Baku in Transcaucasia, the Bolsheviks in early August 1918 not only requested German aid in northern Russia but also consented to a joint occupation of Petrograd and even proposed Field Marshal von Mackensen as the commander of the German-Soviet expedition force. The world might have experienced a shocking entanglement (Rosa Luxemburg already feared a "grotesque 'mating' of Ludendorff and Lenin") had it not

been for the fact that both sides gradually lost interest in overt cooperation after the "black day" of the German armies on the Western front on August 8, 1918. Leaning heavily on limited evidence and distorting it, Herwig has added to rather than done away with clichés surrounding this important phase of Soviet-German relations.

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Professor Herwig does not think it necessary to reply.

TO THE EDITOR:

In reviewing our *A Serbian Village in Historical Perspective* (September 1974) Professor Jožo Tomasević displays a normal sort of academic modesty: he would apparently like to see all books on postwar Yugoslavia mirror that which he considers most important. His concerns are admirably presented in *Peasants, Politics, and Economic Change in Yugoslavia*, published in 1955 and now somewhat dated. Our own modest volume (152 pages in all) is not such a tome and does not claim to be. What it *is* is a short book focusing on peasants, specifically Serbian peasants, in the course of the past one hundred years. It was prepared within the framework of an anthropological series designed to present survey case studies in cultural anthropology.

Tomasević's assessment of what is important—"agricultural cooperatives, government planning, and the village in wartime"—implicitly pits what he regards as trivial or folkloristic against more "serious" matters. A reviewer versed in a social-structural, cultural perspective, in other words in an integrated view of village life, would understand that ethnographic topics relate directly to economic life and, more importantly, to the nature of a functioning peasant society. How can Tomasević reject the notion of the importance of such an integrated view and at the same time presume to talk about Serbian values?

Of course the war was important. Obviously the impact of the Communist victory was great. This we acknowledge in our book. We choose to deal in the concluding chapter with the consequences of this revolution rather than the details of the struggle, which preoccupy the reviewer. Wars destroy, but they do not in themselves invariably bring about fundamental social and cultural change. Some matters are slow to alter despite the intervention of war and revolution. An example treated in our study is the relative economic and social statuses of extended kinship groups in the village, which show a continuity going back over one hundred years. Perhaps the most significant change in the postwar village has been the massive urban-bound migrations of youth over the past two decades. This phenomenon has no historical precedent and transcends political boundaries and ideological systems. In our book we also deal with changes which we consider to be a specific outgrowth of Yugoslav communism.

Our study was not written for the specialist, but it does not take a learned reviewer to realize that the small lignite mine in this village (Tomasević cites it as evidence that the village is therefore atypical) is a common rural extractive enterprise, secondary to the village economy and coexisting with traditional cultivating and herding patterns.

"In analyzing agriculture they rely too much on quotations." Right. We let Serbian scholars and the local people to whom change is happening express their