

## LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

I feel that I must take strong exception to some of the things which Professor Karlinsky says in his review of the excellent Malmstad-Markov three-volume edition of Mikhail Kuzmin's *Works* (*Slavic Review*, March 1979).

In speaking of Gumilev's review of Kuzmin's *Osennie ozera* in *Apollon* in 1912, Professor Karlinsky says that Gumilev was "the only major poet of that period who chose to make an issue in print of Kuzmin's homosexuality." While it is true that Gumilev mentioned—though he was not the only one to do so then—homosexual love as one of the important themes of Kuzmin's poetry, in what way did he "make an issue" of it? Professor Karlinsky neither explains nor illustrates this. What is even worse, in quoting in a footnote the concluding passage of Gumilev's review, Karlinsky asserts, in the body of his article, that Gumilev "complimented" [?] Kuzmin on being "a spokesman for the views and emotions of a whole array of people, *united by a common culture, who have quite justly risen to the crest of life's wave*" (my italics). He makes it quite clear that for him "a whole array of people" means homosexuals and even transposes, rather vulgarly, Gumilev's statement into "the parlance of the 1970s."

Whatever may be one's attitude to homosexuality (with which Gumilev himself had nothing to do), what right does Professor Karlinsky have to put such an interpretation on Gumilev's words? It is obvious that by people "united by a common culture" Gumilev meant the poets and other writers grouped, like Kuzmin and himself, around *Apollon*, the militant mouthpiece of Russian modernism in those days, if not modern Russian writers and artists in general. And does Professor Karlinsky seriously think that Gumilev could have, in 1912, spoken of homosexuals in Russia as being "on the crest of life's wave"?

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PROFESSOR KARLINSKY REPLIES:

Since Gumilev devoted most of his review of Kuzmin's *Autumnal Lakes* to explaining to the readers that the book dealt predominantly with erotic feelings aroused in the poet's *persona* by other men, it is hard to imagine that Gumilev thought that the book expressed "the views and emotions" of "the poets and other writers grouped around *Apollon*" (including Gumilev himself), who were, as far as I know, mostly heterosexual.

And since the years around 1912 were a time when Russian novels on homosexual themes were being published, plays staged, and poets of the stature of Viacheslav Ivanov, Kuzmin, Kliuev, Riurik Ivnev, and Marina Tsvetaeva (see her cycle "Po-druga," 1914–15, in *Neizdannoe* [Paris, 1976], pp. 61–77) felt free to describe their homosexual experiences in their poetry, and when numerous other prominent personalities in literature and the arts who were bisexual or homosexual (Zinovieva-Annibal, Diaghilev, Nijinsky, Filosofov, and the painters Sudeikin and Somov, to name a few) achieved success without bothering to hide their orientation—a situation unthinkable prior to 1906 (cf. the fears and anxieties of the homosexuals of Tchaikovsky's generation) or after 1917—Gumilev's phrase "risen to the crest of life's wave" does not seem misplaced.

## TO THE EDITOR:

In many years of book reviewing, I have not come across so graceless—to put it mildly—a book review as that written by Eva S. Balogh of Thomas Spira's *German-Hungarian Relations and the Swabian Problem: From Károlyi to Gömbös 1919–1936* in your issue of December 1978 (vol. 37, no. 4, pp. 700–702). Where experts in the field have praised this study by a truly able and conscientious scholar, your reviewer unaccountably descends to picayune carping, half-truths, and distortions. She mistakes clear-cut objectivity for pro-Germanism and sets a dangerous intellectual precedent by intimating that nothing less than total agreement with her own views is acceptable in her narrow field—on debatable issues.

Fair-minded historians will not be impressed by this clumsy kind of claim for omniscience from a small hill near Mount Olympus. One expects more mature judgments in the respected pages of the *Slavic Review*.

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## TO THE EDITOR:

No author likes to receive a negative review of his work, but reviewers are entitled to their opinions, and I have made it a point to try to look at their criticisms objectively. I also have written a number of reviews and have tried to be objective and honest in my reporting. Unfortunately, Dr. Spector's review of my book *Clash Over Romania: British and American Policies Toward Romania, 1938–1947* (*Slavic Review*, September 1979) is just the opposite of what I would call objective, intelligent reviewing. In fact, I wonder how much beyond the introduction and the conclusion this reviewer actually read.

The overall purpose of the book was simply to show the political policies and diplomacy of England and the United States toward Rumania during the years 1938 to 1947, touching upon the economic and military events of the period only as they related to their political policies. On the other hand, Dr. Spector claimed that I made a "herculean effort" to write a full "diplomatic, military, economic, and social history of the period" and then proceeded to criticize me for failing to accomplish this! More disturbing was his remark that Albert Resis, in his essay "The Churchill-Stalin Secret Percentages Agreement on the Balkans," "refers to more sources on that event alone than on all the sources" I used "put together." This is simply absurd. Based on my calculations, Resis lists the use of approximately forty different sources comprising seventy footnotes. In my work I list two hundred and seventy-two sources as well as over eight hundred separate footnotes. There is no excuse for this kind of sloppy reviewing!

In one way, Dr. Spector was correct in saying that my book was "selective." My bibliography was somewhat limited, limited largely to those sources I quoted from in the text. I must have looked at at least four times that many sources, but was it essential that I list all or most of them? It is always necessary to pack one's bibliography with a lot of "window dressing" in order to impress those who think a colossal bibliography is a mark of true scholarship? Moreover, what important works on Rumania during the period did I fail to include? In addition, in dealing with overall Allied policies toward Eastern Europe and the Balkans during the Second World War, I felt I had to be somewhat selective in the amount of explanation I could give, especially in those areas that already have been extensively covered by other historians.