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Reviews—book reviews, film reviews, review essays at critical junctures in an author's or subject's life, reports on restricted-access or distant conferences, exhibits and like events in scholarly life—are of great importance to the readers of *Slavic Review*. They convey information that we need in order to stay current, opinion that we need to stay critical and—the mainstay of our professional life—judgments that test and re-affirm our standards. Right now they are important proof of the cohesiveness of our area-studies endeavor. Reviews also constitute the most labor-intensive and often vexing part of the journal for those who contribute reviews and for those who edit them. It is time I rendered a brief report on the subject of reviews.

Three years ago *Slavic Review* was printing about 35 book reviews per issue. The Books Received column was brief and eccentric, since many publishers had ceased sending the journal unsolicited review copies. The oomph had gone out of the endeavor. We eliminated the column, began requesting large numbers of titles from publishers in the US and abroad, computerized the tracking system for reviews, and immediately reached a plateau of 50 to 60 book reviews per issue. For the whole of Russian, Eurasian and East European studies, Books Editor Ben Eklof performed the task of selecting books for review and assigning reviewers, ably assisted by colleagues at Indiana University's Russian and East European Studies Institute, in particular Jack Bielasiak, Malcolm Brown, Robert Campbell, Henry Cooper, Roy Gardner, Hiro Kuromiya, Barbara and Charles Jelavich, Owen Johnson, Herbert Kaplan, Michael Parrish, Dina Spechler and Toivo Raun. It was a start-up system that worked, thanks to the generosity of the participants, to whom we extend our complete gratitude.

Beginning with this issue Prof. Catherine Albrecht of the University of Baltimore joins the journal as Books Editor, Eastern Europe; Prof. Eklof will retain the title for books on Russia, Eurasia and Russian foreign policy. Each will maintain a circle of consultants, including the *Slavic Review* Editorial Board, since the specializations covered are beyond the powers of the most industrious and experienced among us. As an aid to the Books Editors we would like to obtain information from our readership in order to establish a reference file of reviewer competencies by specialization, national area of expertise, and subject matter of particular interest (of that more below, but if you wish to participate and are pressed for time at the moment, proceed directly to the card enclosed with this issue; and please see the back cover for details).

With the help of Svetlana Boym as Films Editor, film reviews became a regular feature of the journal last year; the editors and Editorial Board have been receptive to a wide range of review essays; conference conveners have cooperated to render timely conference reports. With this issue we introduce a section of "Featured Reviews," selected by the editors from among solicited contributions for the importance of the work under review and the quality of the review. I would like to see the journal review art and anthropological exhibits of interest to

scholars. There are surely other media of scholarly content that need to be embraced in the review habits of the journal, and we are wide open to your recommendations.

Innovations aside, book reviews remain the staple of this scholarly journal: they provide readers with summaries and evaluations of work in and on the borders of their specializations, and therein lies the source of the labor-intensiveness and the not inconsiderable vexation for the editors. The most recent, 1991 membership *Directory* of AAASS lists 22 constituent disciplinary specializations in 24 countries or areas for the 3,679 current members of the Association; the numbers are expanding, of course, as the ground shifts under the profession and the profession expands. Locating works for potential review, selecting among them, matching them up with willing and able reviewers, maintaining the minimum desirable uniformity of coverage, format, quality and clarity in over two hundred reviews per year are considerable editorial tasks. These tasks have to be performed at the intersection of the various permutations and combinations of our academic disciplines and national or sub-national areas of expertise. The sum total of all this complexity descends upon an English-language written product which, from an editor's point of view, is a polyglot, polymath stream of discourse.

When we have done our job of matching book and reviewer well, the level of cooperation and the quality of the review are consistently high; now we need to improve our information base by surveying willing reviewers' fields of competence and particular subjects of interest. The card enclosed with this issue provides an opportunity for you to record your fields and subjects; we will convert the information to a computerized database for use in identifying potential reviewers. It is my hope that continued industry on the part of the editors and a better base of information will enable you to take the book review section of *Slavic Review* to a higher plateau next year, between 75 and 85 titles reviewed per issue. That, by the way, would bring us to the doorstep of the journal's traditional achievement in this important section.

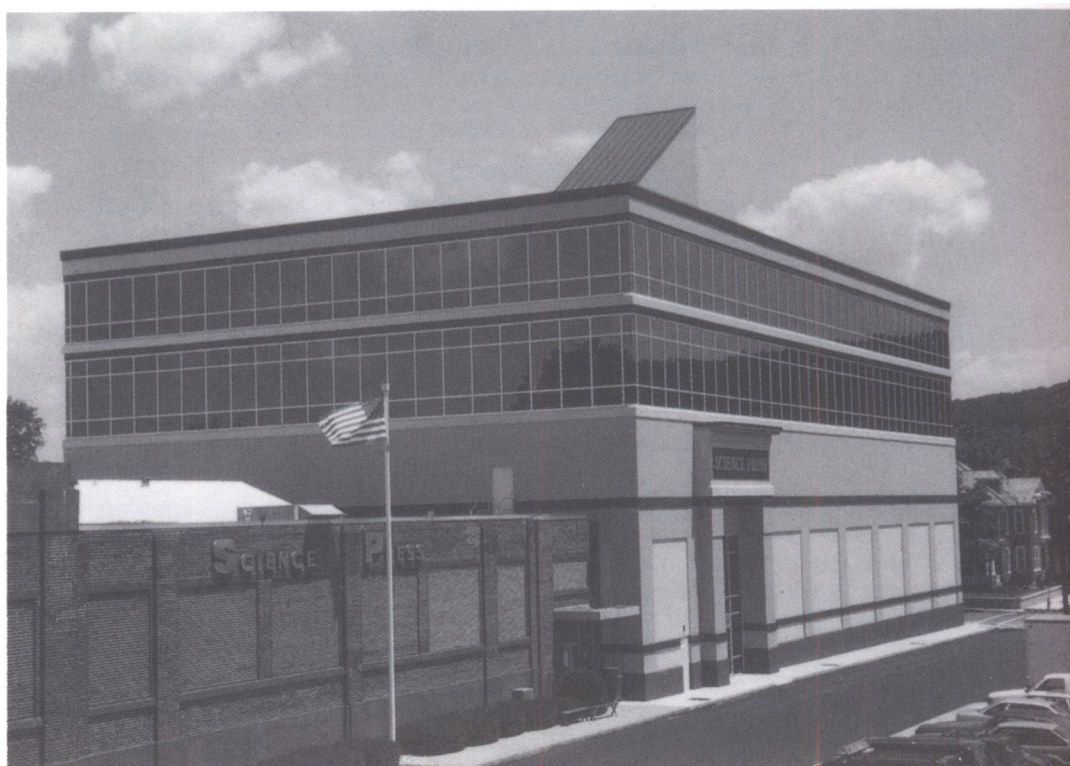
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I urge the reader, social scientist and historian alike, to fold out the insert in this issue's "fast track" publication, "Society Transformed? Rethinking the Social Roots of Perestroika." Glance at the continuities that are elaborated in Prof. Donna Bahry's study of fundamental public values at the end of the Stalin, Brezhnev and Gorbachev eras. The consistency in support of state-owned heavy industry and opposition to state-monopolized agriculture asks us to ponder the divisions in Soviet history we routinely espouse. Here too consider the three articles in peasant studies that bridge the centuries and the cataclysm of political change. Far from confirming the timeless life of the peasant insulated from a world in transformation, these and further works to appear in the Spring 1994 *Slavic Review* examine the relentless assaults on the "little community" of rural Russia and that community's skillful adaptations.

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