

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

I would like to correct numerous errors and misstatements made by Charles Ingrao in the review of my book *Ethnic Cleansing*.

He writes that “no competent scholar [would] claim that the Peace of Westphalia first established ‘the principle of religious homogeneity’” (p. 16). I do nothing of the kind: I clearly state it was the Peace of Augsburg! The Peace of Westphalia is not mentioned. This could be “mere” sloppiness. But what is one to make of his assertion that in my treatment of Bosnia I rely on a hopelessly outdated 50-year old study when in fact the work in question was used in only three references out of 59 and not at all in the chapter on Bosnia?! This is fabrication. My data on victims and ethnic composition come from the U.N., Keesing, and Zerjavic. Nor do I speak of collective guilt, either that of the Sudeten Germans or anyone else. And so on.

Unfortunately (deliberate?) error and fabrication are not Ingrao’s worst offense. His discussion of many issues shows he is completely out of his element. For example, what is one to make of his “success stories” like Vojevodina, Corsica, and the Basque provinces, all of which are the scene of endemic, on-going, and often violent conflict? (The example of Vojevodina with its recent expulsions of Croats and Hungarians is particularly inappropriate.) And what are ethnically homogeneous West Berlin (aside from the guest workers) and Hong Kong doing in this list? And who would compare the decolonization of Hong Kong with Puerto Rico or the reunification of Berlin? No one with a minimal level of competence. Many of his other pronouncements are equally uninformed. In his treatment of the transfer from Czechoslovakia, Ingrao confuses the period of chaotic expulsions immediately after the liberation with the transfer itself, which was fairly orderly, supervised by the Red Cross and frequently witnessed by foreign correspondents. Further, he disagrees with my assessment that the 1919 frontiers in Central Europe were “surprisingly durable” because “prominent British and American historians (sic) and statesmen” tried to “recreate a multinational great power between Germany and the USSR.” This is downright bizarre: first, because whether they had tried or not, the frontiers were stable (except for Polish and Soviet ones); and second, because the only power that could aspire for this role was Poland. It was France that tried to build up Poland (and the Little Entente) as a counterweight to Germany and communist Russia. On the contrary, Britain and America tried to confine Poland within the Curzon line.

Ingrao claims that I dismiss autonomy, another misstatement. The task I set myself was to analyze and offer solutions in areas where usual solutions had failed. I don’t treat areas where autonomy succeeded, any more than a doctor treats a healthy person. If my case studies are short and limited, it is because they were designed to

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

introduce readers unfamiliar with these situations. An overview of 10–15 pages cannot be in-depth, but it served its purpose. (Even so, I was more than 30% over the book-length limit.)

Finally, my approach to the Palestinian problem draws accusations of a hidden agenda. An absolutely identical approach to the Tamil problem elicits not a squeak. Could it be that Ingrao has a not so hidden prejudice? En passant, *Choice* recognized my book as an outstanding academic book of the year.

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