

that objectivity was not guaranteed in either case. That rationale, accepted by such publications as *The New York Times Book Review*, need not obstruct another basically sound principle. What matters is not who reviews a book but what the review says.

TO THE EDITOR:

The *Slavic Review's* status among journals dealing with Soviet and East European affairs is standard setting. Unfortunately Victoria F. Brown's review of *Transylvania: The Roots of Ethnic Conflict* (*Slavic Review* 44 [Fall 1985]) does not measure up to the *Review's* standards.

Brown's comments are not about the book she is supposed to be analyzing but are an attack on the credibility of the contributors to the volume. She charges that the latter are "nationalistic" pro-Hungarians, because fourteen of them spelled *Romania* as *Rumania*(?). Yet until the late 1960s it was general practice to write *Romania* as *Rumania*. No lesser scholar of Romania than Stephen Fischer-Galati still used *Rumania* as late as 1971 in the title of one of his books. This question is more closely related to a desire for precision in designations than a manifestation of nationalism. A re-reading of the introduction to the book might clear up this question for Brown.

The clincher for Brown, however, is that the "authors" are "virtually all either Hungarian by origin or Hungarian specialists or both." She obviously believes that all Hungarians are nationalists, that even as scholars they cannot divest themselves of their Hungarian origins, and that they consequently express a "Hungarian sensibility"—in other words, that they cannot be objective. But would Brown apply this yardstick to Russian historians of Russian origin, such as Raeff, Riasanovsky, Dallin, Rabinowitz, and others? Would she belittle a black history collection written by blacks, or a history of women by women, or, even more absurd, historical studies on the United States written by scholars from that country?

Aside from questioning the possibility of objectivity because of the origin of the contributors, Brown makes the point that most of the sources used by the contributors are Hungarian. A more than cursory glance at the work would reveal that there are also numerous Latin, German, French, English, Italian, and Romanian texts used as documentation. Any paucity of Romanian sources is due to the fact that the Romanian archives are closed for many of the subjects that the book covers.

The critique approaches the ridiculous when Brown asserts that the book does not give equal time to a defense of the Daco-Roman theory of Romanian origins. Following her line of argument, one would have to give equal time to the defenders of the Donation of Constantine, even though historians have dismissed its validity ever since Lorenzo Valla.

But the reviewer raises an issue that is even more disturbing: She feels the volume has not given equal time to the discussion of the fate of Romanians in the Dual Monarchy while it devotes a whole section to the fate of Hungarians in Ceausescu's Romania. (Parenthetically, she does admit that the "Hungarian treatment of minorities before World War I has already been more than amply documented.") To make this kind of a demand for equal time concerning things that are unequal indicates that she either knows no pre-1914 Austro-Hungarian history or does not know, or does not want to know, what is going on in present-day Romania. International human rights organizations and forums, such as the latest PEN Congress, Amnesty International, the United States Helsinki Watch Committee, and even United States government officials (former ambassador Funderburk or Secretary of State Shultz), have observed that the Ceausescu regime has a record of repression unmatched in Eastern Europe.

It is sad that Brown has not reviewed the book on its own merits but has instead sought to discredit it by presenting it as a sophisticated version of old-fashioned Hungarian

nationalism. But she is the one reacting to the present with an outdated stereotype. Just as interwar irredentism has been eclipsed by time, so too should the knee-jerk reactions of the former Little Entente and their apologists. To build bridges of understanding, we must read and comprehend with open minds *and* open hearts.

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(This letter was also signed
by the two other editors of
the volume in question.)

PROFESSOR BROWN REPLIES:

It seems there's no winning at this game. Already I am in bad odor with the authors of a recent Romanian history of Transylvania because of some sharp questioning of their objectivity in a review for a Canadian journal, and now this from the opposition.

The editors of *Transylvania: The Roots of Ethnic Conflict* have neglected, in their indignation, to note that, along with the criticisms of their book, the review contained both praise for the balance and contributions to the literature of several articles and recognition of the "great deal of telling detail adduced to demonstrate present-day oppression of the Hungarian minority." Nothing is to be gained by entering into yet another series of polemical harangues of the sort which this beautiful but unfortunate land has so often provoked. One can only hope that scholars and other interested (and disinterested) parties will read this book, and perhaps the review, and be able to come to their own unbiased conclusions.