

LETTERS

From the Editor:

Slavic Review publishes letters to the editor with educational or research merit. Where the letter concerns a publication in *Slavic Review*, the author of the publication will be offered an opportunity to respond. Space limitations dictate that comment regarding a book review should be limited to one paragraph; comment on an article should not exceed 750 to 1,000 words. The editor encourages writers to refrain from ad hominem discourse.

D.P.K.

To the Editor:

I suggest that before Mary Fulbrook reviews a book she read it carefully rather than permitting her ideological preferences to do her thinking for her. I would also suggest that she avoid books on topics about which she knows nothing (the East German military). My main thesis in the book (*Requiem for an Army: The Demise of the East German Military*, reviewed in *Slavic Review*, vol. 60, no. 1) is that most of those who wore the uniform of the National People's Army performed great services to their country and the world, not only by resisting the temptation to use force to maintain the East German regime, but also by facilitating the German Democratic Republic's (GDR) transition to democracy even though that meant an end to their privileged status. Unfortunately, Fulbrook does not understand the role played by military. Western policymakers and intelligence agencies considered it critical. Fulbrook also criticizes me for not focusing on the Protestant peace movement as well as for my comments about the role played by Rainer Eppelmann, who served as minister for defense and disarmament during the last years of the GDR. It may come as a shock to her, but the book was not about the Protestant Church and its role in the GDR. It was about the military. I have great respect for the role played by the Protestant Church. Indeed, I am writing a biography of Eppelmann, together with the former East German colonel she sarcastically noted endorsed my book—with Eppelmann's enthusiastic support! It is also worth noting that Eppelmann praised this book as evenhanded and expressed the same kind of gratitude toward those who served in the army's ranks (see his discussion in his book, *Wendewege* for example) as I did in my book. I defy Fulbrook or anyone else to disprove my main thesis: that for the existence of a democratic, free East Germany we owe thanks to former members of the East German military—not because we necessarily like them—but because they held to the oath they took. They did not push for democracy, but they certainly could have made a mess of the process if they had acted differently.

DALE HERSPRING
Kansas State University

Professor Fulbrook replies:

I am not sure how Dale Herspring can claim any real knowledge of my alleged "ideological preferences" or the care with which I supposedly read his book—but this opening defamatory insinuation, followed by a flow of unrelieved sarcasm, illustrates an approach to empirical evidence and scholarly debate that I do not share. Indeed, I find it most disturbing.

Of course it is more than obvious that Herspring's "main thesis" is that "we owe" a debt of gratitude to the National People's Army (NVA) for its renunciation of force. I too happen to be grateful for the lack of bloodshed. As academics, however, our task is not to offer thanks but to explain. And this requires a more serious evaluation of the evidence than Herspring provides. He makes uncritical use of highly *parti pris* oral history sources; he

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