

From the *Slavic Review* Editorial Board:

*Slavic Review* publishes signed letters to the editor by individuals 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 restricted to one paragraph of no more than 250 words; comment on an article or forum should not exceed 750 to 1,000 words. When we receive many letters on a topic, some letters will be published on the *Slavic Review* web site with opportunities for further discussion. Letters may be submitted by e-mail, but a signed copy on official letterhead or with a complete return address must follow. The editor reserves the right to refuse to print, or to publish with cuts, letters that contain personal abuse or otherwise fail to meet the standards of debate expected in a scholarly journal.

To the Editor:

The Spring 2008 issue of *Slavic Review* (vol. 67, no. 1) carried a review written by Aleksandar Pavković of *Conflict in South-Eastern Europe at the End of the Twentieth Century: A "Scholars' Initiative" Assesses Some of the Controversies*, edited by Thomas Emmert and Charles Ingrao, to which I contributed two chapters. Pavković claims that my classification of approaches concerning the Yugoslav meltdown is "arbitrary" (221) but does not tell the reader what my classification scheme is. In fact, I divide the approaches into several broad categories: those that emphasize external factors (such as the end of the Cold War), those that look to national character, those that bring into the picture (albeit not exclusively) nineteenth-century problems, the ancient hatreds school, and variously those emphasizing economic problems, problems associated with the political system, and/or human agency. What scheme does Pavković prefer? Second, Pavković claims that I believe that everyone writing about Yugoslavia is "dealing with the same set of questions" (221). Yet, on page 5, I mention five questions that come up in discussions of the Yugoslav meltdown and then show that some writers look at some questions, others at other questions. On page 25 I wrote that the theories presented up to then had not addressed question 3. Third, he claims that I do not acknowledge that some people advocate a "multifactor approach" (221) and yet, on page 18, I explicitly acknowledge that some scholars gave "non-exclusive stress to systemic factors" (which is to say that they adopt multifactor approaches), and on pages 27–30 I advocate precisely such an approach, under the subtitle "Toward a Synthesis of Approaches."

SABRINA P. RAMET

*Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway*

Professor Pavković responds:

In classifying various approaches to the "roots" of Yugoslav disintegration (which Sabrina P. Ramet proceeds to "assess"), Ramet combines some historical criteria (*ancient hatreds*, the era of the *Cold War*, the *nineteenth century*) with structural and agency-based criteria without explaining how the first differs from the last two. Some ancient-hatred narratives, for example, purport to explain disintegration or conflict in terms of human agency and, at that level, do not seem to differ from the approaches classified as human-agency approaches. Hence her classification appears to be based on a selection of arbitrarily selected criteria. Further, Ramet appears to believe that the diplomats, journalists, politicians, and social scientists whose works she is discussing are all attempting to explain social phenomena *and* to assign personal or collective responsibility for them. This might have led Ramet to assign several multiple factor explanations, advanced by social scientists,

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to the approaches (favored by journalists and politicians) that emphasize only a single factor. Perhaps she thought that these scientists are also seeking to assign collective responsibility to a single group or factor, while in fact they were offering a ranking of several causal factors. One of the best grounded and complex multiple factor theories is confined to a brief footnote; its author forcefully argues that the search for collective or personal responsibility in general is *not* the task of social science. Her contribution to this volume, in my opinion, fails to do justice to the social science theories that attempt to offer empirically testable explanations of the Yugoslav disintegration.

ALEKSANDAR PAVKOVIĆ  
*University of Macao, Taipa, Macao*

To the Editor:

I read with increasing incredulity and disappointment the review of *From Sovietology to Postcoloniality* edited by Janusz Korek and published by Södertörn Academic Studies in 2007 in the Summer 2008 issue of *Slavic Review* (vol. 67, no. 2). Two-thirds of the review consists of admonitions against treating central and eastern Europe as postcolonial territories; only toward the end does the reviewer mention the contents of the volume he was supposed to survey.

The reviewer posits that since Franz Fanon, a black man, came to dislike French and European culture (although he wrote in French), no European nation can be subject to colonialism. But the second thesis does not follow from the first. He further posits that “the ‘Enlightenment Project’” (478) the colonized peoples of Africa and Asia rejected was embraced by intellectuals in eastern Europe, and thus they cannot themselves be colonial subjects. Even if this erroneous generalization about the Enlightenment were true, the second thesis does not follow.

*Slavic Review* is a periodical published in a country that began as the “thirteen colonies” and fought a war of independence against the colonizing power. White-on-white colonialism was not uncommon in Europe either. It is disturbing that *Slavic Review* has published reviews of books dealing with Russian/Soviet colonialism written by persons who on principle reject the notion that *non-Germanic central Europe* was a Russian/Soviet colony. Such conditions produce a rant rather than a review. Soviet/Russian colonialism often belonged to the white-on-white variety and developed unique features (such as the “surrogate hegemon”) that are presently being theorized by academics in a number of countries. Among the most outstanding is Dariusz Skorczewski of the Catholic University of Lublin. The review penned by Stephen Velychenko shows no familiarity with such research and appears bent on discouraging young scholars from pursuing this line of inquiry.

EWA THOMPSON  
*Rice University*

Professor Velychenko responds:

Like most historians who dare to review modern literary scholarship, I am as overwhelmed by “litcrits” exposition of theory as by the ignorance of history most of them share. The imbalance is only partly compensated for by the insights that the best of the “postcolonialists” within this group sometimes provide. Yes, I would not encourage anyone to classify something as “white-on-white colonialism,” to study whether it was like or unlike a “yellow-on-yellow colonialism,” or to investigate whether Shaka Zulu was responsible for “black-on-black colonialism.” Perhaps such students could go the way of Napier, who began by counting angels on pinheads and ended with logarithms. My hunch is they will end up like Francis Bacon. Trying to discover a way to preserve meat, he died of pneumonia caught while stuffing dead chickens with snow.

Ewa Thompson implied that I am among those who “on principle reject the notion that non-Germanic central Europe was a Russian/Soviet colony.” I do not. Just as she wrote, this notion is just that, a notion, not a proven, generally accepted fact. The subject requires more historical study and, in my opinion as a historian, the jury is still out on the issue of whether or not Russian-ruled European lands were “Russian colonies.” “Litcrits” can think otherwise and invent more obscure neologisms like “surrogate hegemon,” to