

TO THE EDITOR:

The letter of zoologist A. C. Fabergé which appeared in the September 1965 issue of the *Slavic Review* is of major importance. The publishing of such a letter is needed in these times, especially needed in the realm of scholarship, and needed above all in fields such as ours. The last is true because serious interest in Russian, Slavic, and Communist studies in the United States goes back only two decades and, its start coinciding with the end of World War II, has been overwhelmed by cold-war conditions and the spawning therefrom of hordes of journalist sages and suckling scholars. Both the former, arriving upon the scene after a brief wartime or cold-war sojourn in the USSR, and the latter, upon acquiring their doctoral degrees, have too often been granted an academic status far greater than their knowledge or their experience warranted. Men in their thirties and forties have received distinctions normally reserved for septuagenarians. Thereupon, hungrily seeking the rewards and recognition universally open to them, they have tended to take upon themselves multiplicities of labors and responsibilities in amounts exceeding those that serious scholars ought reasonably to assume, meanwhile forgetting that worthwhile writing in the fields of history, political theory, economics, social comment, etc., requires reflection as well as the setting of pages of typescript to print. They also forget that not everyone can be a Plato or an Aristotle, or even a Kliuchevskii.

Professor Fabergé is justified in expressing his dismay. Our giants in Russian history should not overlook the fact that Reval and Tallin are one and the same city. Imagine a leading zoologist seeming not to know that *canis familiaris* is a dog. Granted that the blunder in question was a mechanical one, it still throws a grotesque light upon our profession as a whole. And similar errors bob up with dismal regularity in our scholarly literature. This can only be the result, on the one hand, of sacrificing quality of work for quantity and, on the other, of a general contempt on the part of our aristocracy toward those of commoner stuff who may try to read their outpouring of material. Such superficial effort is encouraged within our pompous Slavic community by the existence of a fantastic notion that anyone who has done anything akin to pioneering work in one area of our immense and practically virgin field is, just because he got a certain recognition first, *ipso facto* an expert for all periods and in all areas of the field.

It is time that this myth was punctured and that we all became more humble. The publication of Professor Fabergé's letter is a fine beginning.

December 20, 1965

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TO THE EDITOR:

I am editing an anthology of Czech poetry in English translation, and hope to publish a representative collection from the earliest times until the present day.

I should be interested to hear from all who would be prepared to submit work with a view to inclusion in the anthology.

November 9, 1965

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