

Letters to the Editor

On Lipset's "Politics and Society in the USSR"

Students of Soviet affairs might reasonably forgive a few factual errors that crept into Seymour Martin Lipset's "Politics and Society in the USSR" (*PS*, March 1990). As Lipset points out, he is "not a Sovietologist." But one of those errors refers to me in a way that is both untrue and, in the context of his account, unfair.

Discussing the Soviet intellectuals he met and their reactions to American Sovietologists, Lipset writes: "Stephen Cohen's work is of course very well known, thanks to Gorbachev's admiration of his sympathetic portrayal of Bukharin." Presumably, Lipset is thinking of a brief encounter I had with Gorbachev in Washington, in December 1987, when the Soviet leader told me that he had read my book *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Political Biography, 1888-1938*. But Gorbachev's comments about the book, which I would characterize as mixed rather than admiring, were not widely reported in the Soviet Union and therefore could not have made my work "very well known" there.

In fact, my book became known in the Soviet Union considerably before Gorbachev came to power in 1985 and in ways that had nothing to do with him. In the mid-1970s, two men in Moscow, one of them Bukharin's son, clandestinely translated a copy of the American edition into Russian. Prepared with great effort and at some risk, their manuscript made its way (as we used to say in those days) to the United States, where it was published in 1980 by Ardis, a Russian-language press in Michigan. Most of those copies then made their way back to the Soviet Union. Even though this contraband Russian edition was regularly confiscated during KGB searches, the book was widely read well before the advent of glasnost, as a number of intellectuals have since recalled in the Soviet press.

According to a recent article (*Literaturnaia gazeta*, January 10, 1990), for example, standard "underground" reading included "Tvardovsky, Galich, Solzhenitsyn, Avtorkhanov, Cohen, Orwell. . . ." In short, that contraband translation made my book well known in the Soviet Union, eventually was read by Gorbachev himself, and finally was reprinted as a Soviet edition in 1989.

I relate this story not as a commentary on my scholarship but to remind Professor Lipset and *PS* readers that before and after Gorbachev's rise to power, Soviet intellectuals—and indeed Soviet society—managed to read, think, and act in ways that owed no "thanks to" the political leadership.

Stephen F. Cohen
Princeton University

Lipset Replies to Cohen

Stephen F. Cohen had the courtesy to send me a copy of his letter to *PS* reacting to my article on "Politics and Society in the USSR" (*PS*, March 1990). I, of course, cannot quarrel with his report of a contraband Russian edition of his book on Bukharin as circulated in the mid-1970s. All I can say is no one I met last summer mentioned it, while the book was cited in the context of discussing Gorbachev's views.

But since Professor Cohen thinks it necessary to remind me and *PS* readers that Soviet intellectuals were able to "read, think and act in ways that owed no 'thanks to' the political leadership" long before Gorbachev's rise to power, I would note that one of my publications (with Richard Dobson) is "The Intellectual as Critic and Rebel: With Special Reference to the United States and the Soviet Union," *Daedalus* 101 (Summer 1972), pp. 137-197. The article discusses, among other subjects, the oppositional role of Russian intellectuals from Czarist days to the early

seventies. As I noted in my *PS* article, though hardly a Sovietologist, I have paid attention to Soviet affairs over the years, and even published a few articles.

Seymour Martin Lipset
Stanford University

Taking Exception

We write to protest the bigoted characterization of gay people and their interests in Harry V. Jaffa's remarks at the funeral of John Adam Wettergreen, which were reprinted in the March 1990 issue of *PS*. As you may recall, Professor Jaffa stated "that public health officials had put the perverse interests of sodomites ahead of the health of the public they were elected to serve" in dealing with the AIDS crisis (p. 75). We have no quarrel with raising questions about public policies and whose interests they serve. But we do reject the demeaning and dehumanizing characterization of any individual or group; and we question the logic of arguments built on such stereotyping.

We believe strongly in freedom of speech and of the press. But we also question the use of demeaning terms like "perverse" and "sodomite" in a professional journal. Would similar anti-black or anti-semitic terms have appeared in *PS*? We think that *PS* owes it to the membership of the APSA, and in particular to our gay and lesbian colleagues, to address this question.

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and Faculty

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We write to protest the publication, in the APSA's official organ of communication among its members, of such an egregious violation of the canons of scholarly discourse and exchange as well as of the rules for scientific inquiry as appeared in Harry Jaffa's "memorial," which referred to the "perverse interests of sodomites" in ending the AIDS epidemic.

One regrets the application of association members' dues to publish abroad an epithet. The reference by derivation in "sodomite" to destruction by God for wickedness (*Webster's*) works to disable persons with, and without AIDS and human immunodeficiency virus infection. This overinclusiveness is fatal. In a discipline inclined toward positivism, the epithet begs a question: What exactly do we know about these people who are being called sodomites? What do we know about the attitudes and the behavior, the values and responsibilities, of these people? Satisfaction with an epithet

is not one of the responsibilities that goes with a scholarly commitment to learning. Application of membership dues in an association for learned people toward unabridged, uncommented-upon publication of an epithet is both inappropriate and offensive.

Similarly dissatisfying is publication abroad of the word "perverse" to describe the civil rights of these people being called sodomites. Not only does the word "perverse" ignore a well known decision taken in 1973 by the American Psychiatric Association as to the normalcy of a homoerotic orientation but also it ignores a tendency among contemporary counselors to emphasize ranges of behavior rather than the concept of normalcy. At the least, the American Political Science Association has an obligation to bring forward in *PS* an editorial perspective that acknowledges the creation of textual meaning intrinsic to the phrase, "perverse interests of sodomites." The phrase is not value-neutral and more, it constructs gay and lesbian people as irresponsible and reprehensible. The phrase discounts the lives and existential experiences of gay men and lesbians. Such a deprivation of connection to politics and history should scarcely pass for a memorial or commemoration.

Further, the editor has told members of the Gay and Lesbian Caucus that both anonymous protests of the publication of Professor Jaffa's remarks were received as well as letters of protest by individuals who requested that their name not be used if their letter was published. What do these facts say about the existence of academic freedom in our profession? What does the status of the author of the phrase "perverse interests of sodomites" and the phrase's imprimature by our profession's official journal say about the possible consequences of exercising one's academic freedom in regard to issues of lesbian and gay rights? We all pay lip service to the principles of freedom of expression and non-discrimination based upon it, but it takes an incident like this one—both publication and responses—to show us the insidious way in which oppression works through rendering

diversity invisible and hence nonexistent.

Mark Blasius
 Co-chair
 Sarah Slavin
 Co-chair

*The Gay and Lesbian
 Political Science Caucus*

"30-Second 'Scholarly' Sound Bites"

The review of my book *Losing from the Inside: The Cost of Conflict in the British Social Democratic Party (APSR, March 1990)* taught me a valuable lesson, which I would like to share with other young members of our profession. To put it bluntly, when you write, do it in a bite.

Provide only 30-second sound bites, and your words will not be quoted out of context. Some of us first learn this lesson when we speak to members of the media. If you say, "x is a possibility, but y is much more likely," you run the risk of being quoted only as saying, "x is a possibility." Until the review of my book, I did not know the same rule applies when we write for other scholars.

Let me make this message perfectly clear: Keep it curt and cute. No ifs, ands, or buts. Quip or quit. You can't win if you don't play. If you continue to pursue your own goals and adhere to your own values when the external environment—in this case, the academic community—calls for something else, you will be losing from the inside.¹

Patricia Lee Sykes
The American University

1. Another lesson learned: For the sake of simplicity, avoid footnotes. They only serve to distract your audience. If you insist on following this archaic scholarly practice, however, be sure to cite all potential reviewers.

APSR Collection Available

I have belonged continuously to APSA for 51 years and I have saved all my copies of the *Review* since that time. The copies are in excellent condition; my collection is at least 99% complete.

Since I am retired, I have now decided that I wish to sell my collection. If you are interested, please contact Dr. William G. Torpey, 810 Grand View Drive, Alexandria, VA 22305.

Toward an Anchor for the Sigelman Ugliness Scale

In the June 1990 issue of *PS* Lee Sigelman makes yet another contribution to the social science literature by examining the attractiveness, or lack thereof, of a large group of elected officials. His finding that Democrats are significantly uglier (at the .001 level) than Republicans promises to have an impact on how we look at politicians, if not politics, in the future. His work might spur further work if we had a better understanding of the measurement. Fortunately, this should be possible.

In Sigelman's article, an unnamed "middle-aged woman who has an inordinate fondness for looking at pictures of men" rates pictures of elected officials "on an ugliness scale ranging from +5 ('Yummie') to -5 ('Yecch')." While such a scale gives us greater precision than would a simpler scheme, empirical research can proceed only with meaningful measures with a firm anchor, a standard from which all other points on the scale can be referenced.

Sigelman would provide a great service to those who wish to build upon his trail-blazing effort by submitting to *PS* his own picture along with the unnamed rater's evaluation of his position on the scale. Then those who wish to replicate Sigelman's work or to apply it to other populations would have a starting point for cumulative, reliable political science research.

Joseph Stewart, Jr.
University of Texas at Dallas

Disciplinary Identity Crisis

The March, 1990 issue of *PS* ("The Profession") reminds us that disciplinary soul-searching continues to preoccupy political scientists. It may be appropriate that the search for the discipline's "unit of analysis" should be an ongoing enterprise. Political scientists seem to be continually haunted by a disciplinary identity-crisis. Customarily, they seek anchorage in the perceived safer harbors of other disciplines or techniques. Those who resist being disciplinary parasites or technicians in search of substance turn to cynicism and assess the state-of-their-art as "journalism without deadlines."

One would think that, lacking theoretical and methodological harmony, the creative energies of political scientists would be stimulated. Seldom is that the case. More often, the result is a renewed outbreak of internecine struggles among various claimants to the discipline's legacy of scholarship. Rather than being instructive or insightful these arguments are frequently waged with acrimony and *ad hominum* invective that distracts from or serves as a disincentive to further research on the causes and consequences of political life.

Given the response of other scientists to disciplinary incongruity, the uneasiness of political scientists with their discipline's disarray is puzzling. The uncertainties foisted upon modern physics and mathematics by Heisenberg and Godel have not deterred members of those disciplines from sustained pursuit of research goals. Theoretical controversies do not stir physicists or mathematicians to interminable debates about disciplinary integrity. Perhaps, this is because members of those disciplines believe that the costs of paradigmatic warfare are simply too high in terms of sacrificed research opportunities.

So, their controversies are left to resolution by research pursuit rather than polemics.

Reading the extended comments on "The Profession" in the latest *PS*, we are reminded of G. H. Hardy's opening paragraph of *A Mathematician's Apology*.

It is a melancholy experience for a professional mathematician (political scientist?) to find himself writing about mathematics (political science?). The function of a mathematician (political scientist?) is to do something, to prove new theorems, to add to mathematics (political science?), and not to talk about what he or other mathematicians (political scientists?) have done. Statesmen despise art critics, and physiologists, physicists, or mathematicians (political scientists?) have usually similar feelings; there is no scorn more profound, or on the whole more justifiable, than that of the men who make for the men who explain. Exposition, criticism, appreciation, is work for second-rate minds.

Atheoretical? Anti-intellectual? Perhaps, and political scientists will defend or reject Hardy's distinction between creation and explanation with the same passion they react to a distinction between facts and values. But then, what are we left with in political science? The battle over the discipline's conscience with verbal assaults like "fetishistic," "mumbo-jumbo" and "pseudo-theoretical" met with charges, explicit and implicit, of theoretical unconsciousness, scientism and technocratic elitism. Are we to believe this is the work of first-rate minds in political science?

Patrick L. Eagan
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