

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Editor:

I recently read Stephen C. Pelletiere's review of my book *The Kurds in Turkey: A Political Dilemma* in your Summer 1991 issue.

Although I recognize that one cannot be loved by all, especially when dealing with such controversial topics, I think it is unfortunate that your journal has given my book such an unfavorable review when such a major journal as the *Middle East Journal* (Autumn 1991), gave it such a good review. Something is wrong. In light of this discrepancy, please allow me briefly to address Dr. Pelletiere's main criticisms of my book on the Kurds.

First, he says that I have given scant attention to "the economic and sociological aspects of the problem." True, but notice the subtitle of my book, "A Political Dilemma." As my title and introduction stated, my purpose was to analyze the political aspects of the problem. Where economics impinged, of course, I did offer some comments. See, for example p. 125 where I wrote that "there, of course, can be no doubt that southeastern Turkey suffers from serious problems of economic underdevelopment." In addition, there are comments about the sociological and economic situation throughout my book, while my bibliography tells my readers what further sources on this topic might be consulted. But again my book is a political analysis.

Second, Dr. Pelletiere criticizes me for making the PKK "come across as little more than a terrorist organization," and then queries "if this is a true representation, then what does that say about the situation of the Turkish Kurds generally? Are they carrying on an authentic liberation movement or what?" He then declares that I have "an obligation to come down on one side or the other of this problem." Why? I am not a spokesman for either side. Rather I am an academic scholar objectively analyzing a very complicated situation in which the ultimate truth is not a monopoly possessed by either side. Making this clear is one of the truly strong points of my book. But Dr. Pelletiere thinks otherwise, although he does not offer any opinion on which side I was supposed to favor or why. Certainly his conclusion that "Gunter has not really thought the matter through," is unwarranted. I have, and indeed have concluded that Turkey should give its "citizens of Kurdish ancestry their most elemental cultural rights" (p. 127). But I have also shown many strong points in the Turkish position. One who reads my book carefully will gain insights into the positions of both sides, not just one as Pelletiere's unfortunate logic ultimately would have.

Finally, Pelletiere criticizes what he calls my book's "curious organization" in discussing transnational aspects of the problem near the end, rather than presumably somewhere else. Indeed, he goes on to make such unfortunate characterizations as calling what I have done as having written "a two character play, and then in the last act introduced a group of additional — important — characters with no attempt to weave them into the plot." I would

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point out that all through my book there are references to possible transnational influences on the Kurds. Indeed, so important is this question that I devoted an entire chapter to it. Apparently my reviewer did not read it very carefully given his final query about whether “the politically active Kurds [are] primarily concerned with promoting the cause of self-determination, or do they rather serve as useful foils by means of which others seek to sabotage the national struggles of the Iraqis, Iranians and the Turks?” Again, it is not as simple as my reviewer would have it. Both aspects clearly are operating, but if he had read me closely enough he would have seen that I concluded that “the official Turkish stress on socio-economic conditions and foreign help continues to ignore the main reason for the Kurdish problem in Turkey, the official cultural suppression of the Kurds” (p. 126).

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