

## Editor's Response

I have served as editor of *Passport* for over four years, and have never felt it necessary to insert my own comments into a roundtable that we published. I hope to not have to do so again.

However, the first paragraph of Mark Moyar's submission suggests that he was misled when he agreed to participate in the discussion of his book, since he was promised "balance" in the selection of commentators, a balance that he believes did not materialize. Such a charge, I think, merits a clarification from the editor.

The criterion involved in the process of choosing *Passport* reviewers is in fact remarkably simple: participants are selected because they have a recognized expertise in the book's topic. I believe that the job of the editor is not to try to ensure divergent responses; in fact, since I have no way of knowing how people will feel about a book until they send me their commentaries, I obviously cannot assume their conclusions in advance. Nor do I feel it is appropriate for me to consider the political leanings of potential authors before inviting them to participate since no member of SHAFR should have to answer to me or anyone else about their political beliefs as a requirement for publication in the organization newsletter. Instead, I look for people who have written widely on the topic and hence can evaluate the sources and place the book within a broader historiographical context. Anyone interested in evaluating the expertise of these four reviewers need only to spend a few minutes on the internet to find their CVs; doing so will reveal an extensive collection of books, articles, chapters, and presentations on this topic, as well as a diversity of historical and methodological approaches. On this level, then, I stand by my selections for this roundtable.

In my view, historians of any political stripe or background can read a work, even one whose conclusions they reject, and evaluate it objectively. When they do so, as I believe the authors here

have done, they have demonstrated balance. The four commentaries seem to analyze the work in question on its merits and only on its merits. An author can ask no more.

The first *Passport* roundtable saw three historians offer criticisms of John Gaddis' *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*. Many of their comments faulted the book for being too charitable towards President Bush's policies. Yet while the commentaries were tough they also struck me as thoughtful, substantive, and fair. And Dr. Gaddis's response was a model of professionalism, erudition, clarity, and wit. That debate should be held up as an example of how historians of different ideological stripes can disagree without questioning the underlying motivation of those who disagree with them. And it is a model that I hope to always follow in these roundtables.

Mitchell Lerner