

*"One word of truth outweighs the world"*

# *Solzhenitsyn and the Liberals*

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SINCE HE WAS EXILED from his homeland over a decade ago, it has become increasingly clear that liberals, whatever they may regard as his merits as a writer, do not like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn or what they represent to be his social and political views. What is not immediately clear is why they dislike him so intensely.

Liberalism, according to Webster's dictionary, is a philosophy which includes, among other principles, a belief in "the autonomy of the individual" and in "the protection of political and civil liberties." Now, certainly Solzhenitsyn is a conservative, and conservatives and liberals do have significant differences which should not be underestimated. But I would like to think these differences would not, generally, include any basic disagreements about the rapacious nature of communist totalitarianism, unarguably the greatest single threat in today's world to the continued existence of "the autonomy of the individual" and "political and civil liberties." Liberals today, to the extent that they remain genuine liberals (and have not degenerated, as some conservatives claim they inevitably must, into collectivists), have every obligation to be actively anti-communist — as much, say, as genuine conservatives in the 1930s were obligated to be actively anti-Nazi and anti-fascist, as too many sadly were not. Solzhenitsyn is considered by many the world's foremost living anti-communist: others, Sakharov for example, have

struggled valiantly against Soviet injustices, but it was Solzhenitsyn who for the first time forced us to admit to ourselves the reality of all the horrible things about the USSR that we had always known but preferred to overlook.

I have in mind here the desire to engage in *mythmaking* about the Soviet Union. For example, in the *New Republic* of February 26, 1936, Robert M. MacGregor praised "the speed, effectiveness, and accuracy" of work performed under the fraudulent Stakhanovite system, heralding the movement as pointing "to the possibility of wiping out the difference between manual and mental labor, one of the principal attributes, as Stalin interprets it, of actual communism." That Stakhanovism was in fact a cynical and brutal scheme to extort vastly increased work norms out of the shackled and impoverished Soviet worker seems to have been beyond MacGregor's knowledge or interest. Not only liberals believed in such myths. In his 1946 book *I Chose Freedom* the soon-to-defect Victor Kravchenko relates his excruciating inability to disabuse "some thoroughly anti-labor capitalists" of the notion that there prevailed in the USSR a hateful system in which "the workers ruled" and "everybody was equal."

Herein lies the value of Solzhenitsyn's art. The major difficulty with foreign perceptions of the Soviet Union is not that the facts have not been available but that

our imagination was not up to admitting them to our consciousness. "The chief problem confronting the expert in Soviet affairs is not to keep his information up to date, as it is in other fields," wrote the French Sovietologist Alain Besançon in his 1978 book *The Soviet Syndrome*, a scant hundred pages well worth the reading. "His main difficulty lies in accepting as true what most people deem improbable, in believing the unbelievable." The facts, I emphasize, were there: nobody who has read S.P. Melgounov's 1926 book *The Red Terror in Russia* will find much shock value in Stalin's misdeeds. But it was Solzhenitsyn, through some artistic alchemy or fortuitous timing that cannot be entirely explained, who made the world admit as true what could not be true. Today it is commonly accepted that Soviet rule has cost Russia several tens of millions of lives, that the USSR is one vast prison peppered with concentration camps, that "real socialism" is a great engine of murder, torture, slavery. "The main result," wrote Robert Conquest in the *New Republic* in 1978, "has been that it is now no longer possible in any country with reasonably free publication for the Soviet system to find serious defenders. . . . The word *Gulag* has entered the language — every language." This was Solzhenitsyn's doing. It must be among the regime's greatest errors — perhaps a fatal one — that they did not kill him when they had the chance.

As we move through this perilous decade which, I suggest, could very well see the final resolution, one way or the other, of what Communists call "the international class struggle," I think we would do well to listen to what Solzhenitsyn has to say — not agree necessarily, but at least listen — for the sake of his tortured country and for the preservation of liberal values in what remains of the free world. It is not all just *Gulag* and the camps. Recently he has spoken, with insight and originality, on religion in the USSR and in today's world as a whole (the Templeton address, "Men Have Forgotten God"), on China (during a visit to Taiwan), and to the

Japanese people (calling for a "genuine Japanese-Russo-Chinese friendship" in the Far East). But since his initial fanfare greeting in the West — and especially since his 1978 Harvard commencement address — Solzhenitsyn has all but disappeared from the major media, mostly, that is, from the liberal media. Today about the only place one can find his recent statements (such as the three noted above) is in *National Review*. To my knowledge, no other major periodicals — mostly liberal periodicals, or at least more liberal than *National Review* — have seen fit to give him more than passing coverage, usually not even that. There seems to be a common desire that he go away or at least just shut up. And the reason for this is not difficult to discern.

Mention Solzhenitsyn to just about any liberal. He is, you will hear (many times over), an "anti-democrat," an "authoritarian," a "theocrat," an unreconstructed "Russian imperialist," an extremist who borders on being a "fascist," as well as a "monarchist," and, of course, an "anti-Semite." Is it not enough — or, as some suggested after his 1978 Harvard commencement address, maybe too much — that we let him stay here? Why dignify the ravings of this scoundrel and ingrate by quoting him? (Ronald Reagan does in fact quote Solzhenitsyn in his speeches on occasion; so did Ambassador Kirkpatrick. Come to think of it, that's one more count against the three of them.)

There is, however, one public service that Solzhenitsyn performs that even his severest critics will probably concede, the utility of which must be appreciated: he is "Solzhenitsyn, Bogeyman of the Right." By associating people or institutions, however tangentially, with Solzhenitsyn, their credibility is instantly and effortlessly compromised. There are those for whom such a device is indispensable. For example, in a recent article in the *Washington Post*, Josef Joffe and Dimitri Simes sought to illustrate that "extremist" views run rampant at Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL) by quoting an unnamed RL editorialist who, in introducing the

speech given by Solzhenitsyn in Taiwan, called the author an "unofficial envoy of the Russian people to the Chinese island of freedom." Joffe and Simes note this characterization without comment, as if it were so patently absurd as to need no explanation.

From here others pick up the theme. Three liberal human rights organizations — Americas Watch, Helsinki Watch, and the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights — in their subtly titled report *Failure: The Reagan Administration's Human Rights Policy for 1983* cite the *Post* article in support of their claims that RL lauds "Alexander Solzhenitsyn's diatribes against Western ideas of free expression" and that "broadcasters with anti-Western, monarchist, even fascist tendencies often monopolize the programming." See how easy it is. Just string the words together — Solzhenitsyn, anti-Western, monarchist, fascist.

And on it goes. In a report for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by Minority Staff Director Geryld B. Christianson (submitted by Senators Percy and Pell), both the *Post* article and the concerns of Helsinki Watch are used to justify proposals to muzzle the radios, RL in particular. Christianson tosses around names from Russian history like Stolypin, Wrangel, and Vlasov in a manner designed to take advantage of the ignorance of readers unacquainted with the historical facts. (For example, he notes "favorable broadcasts" on Generals Alexeyev and Wrangel, who — and this apparently discredits them in Christianson's mind — "fought on the White Russian side in the Russian civil war." But the White armies represented every non-communist shade of political view in Russia, from monarchists on the Right to Social Revolutionaries on the Left, and included the democratic Center. In fact these political divisions — the only thing the Whites really agreed on was their opposition to the Communists — contributed to their eventual defeat. But what, in Christianson's mind, is objectionable *per se* about service with the Whites? Does he prefer the

Reds?) Solzhenitsyn makes his obligatory appearance in the report. Airing of his Taiwan speech is characterized by Christianson as "the most egregious case" of RL's political bias. He calls Solzhenitsyn's views "clearly outrageous" — this, commenting on a speech where Solzhenitsyn's main point was that the Chinese and Russian peoples should free themselves from communism and should not allow the vicious regimes in Moscow and Peking to stir up hostility between them.

In short, the use of Solzhenitsyn's name and "well-known" political views is a handy cudgel for those desiring to smear Russian anti-communism and, it seems, anti-communism generally. Interestingly, however, his reputed views are usually simply characterized, often in the most extreme terms. Seldom are his opinions on anything exactly described and documented or his works quoted in detail.

There is a certain circularity here. Solzhenitsyn is damned for his supposedly reactionary views, but those who so portray him are loath to waste paper or ink letting him demonstrate just how reactionary he really is — or is not. One would think that giving him the opportunity to parade his "extremism" would be letting him have just so much rope with which to hang himself. In any case, it is an opportunity which his liberal critics have missed time and again. Consequently, I thought it might be useful to pick out those passages which give the sense of Solzhenitsyn's actual political orientation so that we can all see just what sort of reactionary he really is. For those who have taken the time to read him (and even among his fellow conservatives one rarely finds anybody who has managed to plow past the first half of *The Gulag Archipelago*, volume I) this may seem somewhat pedantic, but there may be some value in having the evidence in concentrated form.

To begin with, those who do have some familiarity with his writings are aware that Solzhenitsyn does not, strictly speaking, view his message as "political" but rather as moral. He believes that the essential matters for human beings and nations are

not those relating to governmental structures but rather to choices between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and falsehood. As one of his characters in *August 1914* puts it, the differences that matter are not those between parties and nations but rather "the difference between decency and swinishness."

For instance, in his *Letter to the Soviet Leaders* (sent late in 1973) he states:

This universal, obligatory force-feeding with lies is now the most agonizing aspect of existence in our country — worse than all our material miseries, worse than any lack of civil liberties.

Similarly, he believes that the way for his country to free itself from communism is for each person to refuse to participate in the lie (from the essay "The Smatterers," which appears in the anthology *From Under the Rubble*, 1974):

... in our country the daily lie is not the whim of corrupt natures but a mode of existence, a condition of the daily welfare of every man. In our country the lie has been incorporated into the state system as the vital link holding everything together, with billions of tiny fasteners, several dozen to each man.

This is precisely why we find life so oppressive. But it is also precisely why we should find it natural to straighten up. When oppression is not accompanied by the lie, liberation demands political measures. But when the lie has fastened its claws on us, it is no longer a matter of politics! It is an invasion of man's moral world, and our straightening up and *refusing to lie* is also not political, but simply a retrieval of our human dignity. [Emphasis in original.]

To Solzhenitsyn the sphere of government is purely secondary (from the essay "As Breathing and Consciousness Return," in *Rubble*):

It would be more correct to say that in relation to the true ends of human beings here on earth ... the state struc-

ture is of secondary significance. That this is so, Christ himself teaches us. "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's" — not because every Caesar deserves it, but because Caesar's concern is not the most important thing in our lives.

Solzhenitsyn is often accused of advocating authoritarianism over democracy. However, since he does not see the state structure as a question of overriding importance, he has never, in any passage of which I am aware, stated a preference for any form of government (from "The Mortal Danger," *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1980):

As concerns the theoretical question whether Russia should choose or reject authoritarianism in the future, I have no final opinion, and have not offered any.

Regarding practical considerations, he suggests that authoritarianism would be a realistic first step away from the current state of affairs ("Breathing," in *Rubble*):

If Russia for centuries was used to living under autocratic systems and suffered a total collapse under the democratic system which lasted eight months in 1917, perhaps — I am only asking, not making an assertion — perhaps we should recognize that the evolution of our country from one form of authoritarianism to another would be the most natural, the smoothest, the least painful path of development for it to follow? It may be objected that neither the path ahead, nor less still the new system at the end of it, can be seen. But for that matter we have never been shown any realistic path of transition from our present system to a democratic republic of the Western type. And the first-mentioned transition seems more feasible in that it requires a smaller expenditure of energy by the people.

He is concerned that Russia is not immediately prepared for democracy (from *Letter*):

Here, in Russia, for sheer lack of

practice, democracy survived for only eight months. . . . The emigré groups of Constitutional Democrats and Social Democrats still pride themselves on it to this very day and say that outside forces brought about its collapse. But in reality that democracy was *their* disgrace; they invoked it and promised it so arrogantly, and then created merely a chaotic caricature of democracy, because first of all they turned out to be ill-prepared for it themselves, and then Russia was worse prepared still. Over the last half-century Russia's preparedness for democracy, for a multi-party parliamentary system, could only have diminished. I am inclined to think that its sudden reintroduction now would merely be a melancholy repetition of 1917.

Aside from his discerning no realistic immediate path to a democracy of the Western type, Solzhenitsyn, who describes himself as an "opponent of all revolutions and all armed convulsions, including future ones" (*Letter*), assesses the "realistic" possibilities for change starting from the present rulers' obvious determination to retain at least their own personal power. This entire outlook was summed up in "The Mortal Danger":

But this letter was a genuine address to very real rulers possessed of immeasurable power, and it was plain that the very most one could hope for would be concessions on their side, certainly not capitulation: neither free general elections nor a complete (or even partial) change of leadership could be expected. The most I called for was a renunciation of communist ideology and of its most cruel consequences, so as to allow at least a little more breathing space for the national spirit, for throughout history only nationally-minded individuals have been able to make constructive contributions to society. And the only path down from the icy cliff of totalitarianism that I could propose was the slow and smooth descent via an

authoritarian system. (If an unprepared people were to jump off that cliff directly into democracy, it would be crushed to an anarchical pulp.) This "authoritarianism" of mine also drew immediate fire in the Western press.

Solzhenitsyn's idea of a tolerable authoritarian structure includes a number of qualities which are usually considered prerequisites if not integral parts of a viable constitutional democracy. Again, his point of departure is "the lie" (from *Letter*):

It is not authoritarianism itself that is intolerable, but the ideological lies that are daily foisted upon us. Not so much authoritarianism as arbitrariness and illegality, the sheer illegality of having a single overlord in each district, each province and each sphere, often ignorant and brutal, whose will alone decides all things. An authoritarian order does not necessarily mean that laws are unnecessary or that they exist only on paper, or that they should not reflect the notions and will of the population. Nor does it mean that the legislative, executive and judicial authorities are not independent, any of them, that they are in fact not authorities at all but utterly at the mercy of a telephone call from the only true, self-appointed authority. May I remind you that the *soviets*, which gave their name to our system and existed until July 6, 1918, were in no way dependent upon ideology: ideology or no ideology, they always envisaged the widest possible *consultation* with all working people. [Emphasis in original.]

Indeed, notwithstanding his views on the primacy of morality, the necessity of legality in place of arbitrariness is a recurring theme in Solzhenitsyn's writings. He suggests (in *Letter*) that the Soviet Constitution (superceded in 1977), which, in his view, "from 1936 . . . has not been observed for a single day," may not be entirely beyond hope but may present a basis for future improvements.



He also notes that authoritarian systems, though having certain virtues ("stability, continuity, and immunity from political ague"), have "great dangers and defects":

... the danger of dishonest authorities, upheld by violence, the danger of arbitrary decisions and the difficulty of correcting them, the danger of sliding into tyranny. (from "Breathing," in *Rubble*)

He concludes that a sense of responsibility, "before God and their own conscience," is a necessary restraint on rulers:

The autocrats of our own time are dangerous precisely because it is difficult to find higher values which would bind them.

In cleansing Russian society of the moral legacy of the Soviet period he says (in *The Gulag Archipelago*, volume I):

We have to condemn publicly the very *idea* that some people have a right to repress others. [Emphasis in original.]

But as Solzhenitsyn states in "The Mortal Danger": "My criticism of certain aspects of democracy is well known." However, his criticisms do not relate to the principle of democratic government but rather to what he sees as some difficulties of application:

1. *That the will of the people is not always served* when, for instance, governments rule in the minority or with only a slim majority and when great parts of the electorate are disillusioned to the point of not voting ("Mortal Danger"); "when a tiny party holds the balance between two big ones," "when superpowers are rocked by party struggles with no ethical basis." ("Breathing," in *Rubble*)

2. *That democracies are often weak against terrorists* ("Breathing," in *Rubble*; *Letter*; and "Mortal Danger"), "when unlimited freedom of discussion can wreck a country's resistance to some looming danger and lead to

capitulation in wars not yet lost" ("Breathing," in *Rubble*); and that democracies have an apparent "inability to prevent the growth of organized crime, or to check unrestrained profiteering at the expense of public morality." ("Mortal Danger")

3. *That "the terrifying phenomenon of totalitarianism, which has been born into our world perhaps four times, did not issue from authoritarian systems, but in each case from a weak democracy: the one created by the February Revolution in Russia, the Weimar and Italian republics, and Chiang Kai-shek's China. The majority of governments in human history have been authoritarian, but they have yet to give birth to a totalitarian regime."* ("Mortal Danger")

On top of his "authoritarianism," Solzhenitsyn has been accused of advocating a theocratic form of government. He denies the charge (from "Mortal Danger"):

This is a flagrant misrepresentation; I have never said or written anything of the sort. The day-to-day activity of governing in no sense belongs to the sphere of religion. What I do believe is that the state should not persecute religion, and that, furthermore, religion should make an appropriate contribution to the spiritual life of the nation. Such a situation obtains in Poland and Israel and no one condemns it; I cannot understand why the same thing should be forbidden to Russia — a land that has carried its faith through ten centuries and earned the right to it by sixty years of suffering and the blood of millions of laymen and tens of thousands of clergy.

In his *Letter* he states:

I myself see Christianity today as the only living spiritual force capable of undertaking the spiritual healing of Russia. But I request and propose no special privileges for it, simply that it

should be treated fairly and not suppressed.

Nevertheless, Solzhenitsyn's strong commitment to religious and patriotic principles has prompted some critics to accuse him of seeking to revive the pre-1917 Russian imperial tradition. Indeed, it is safe to say that the supposed similarity between Solzhenitsyn's reputed Russian "imperialism" and Soviet expansionism has become bound up with the perennial question of whether Soviet policy is specifically Russian rather than communist. While an adequate examination of this subject is beyond the scope of this paper, it is reasonable to speculate whether Solzhenitsyn has simply been dragged into an effort to attribute the Soviet regime's demonstrable aggressiveness to some incorrigible Russian urge for conquest rather than to one of the idols of our age, socialism. In any event, in "The Mortal Danger" Solzhenitsyn summarizes the position he took in his *Letter on Russia's* role in the world:

In the sphere of foreign policy, my proposal foresaw the following consequences: We were not to "concern ourselves with the fortunes of other hemispheres," we were to "renounce unattainable and irrelevant missions of world domination," to "give up our Mediterranean aspirations," and to "abandon the financing of South American revolutionaries." Africa should be left in peace; Soviet troops should be withdrawn from Eastern Europe (so that these puppet regimes would be left to face their own people without the support of Soviet divisions); no peripheral nation should be forcibly kept within the bounds of our country; the youth of Russia should be liberated from universal, compulsory military service. As I wrote: "The demands of internal growth are incomparably more important to us, as a people, than the need for any external expansion of our power."

In his *Letter* he notes:

For the next half-century our only genuine military need will be to defend ourselves against China, and it would be better not to go to war with her at all. A well-established Northeast is also our best defense against China [Note: after jettisoning Marxist-Leninist ideology, Solzhenitsyn proposes that Russia shift her energies from promoting world revolution to internal development, primarily in Siberia and northeast Russia.] *No one else on earth* threatens us, and no one is going to attack us. [Emphasis in original.]

Among the epithets too commonly tossed around today is the word "fascist," and Solzhenitsyn, as have other conservatives, has on occasion been labeled as such. As to its applicability to him and his views, Solzhenitsyn seems to mention "fascism" (actually, Naziism) only once in *The Gulag Archipelago*, volume III, where he calls it a "quadruped" comparable to communism. It is noteworthy that in his observation that totalitarianism has come into being "four times" he apparently considers Italian Fascism and German National Socialism in a category with Marxism-Leninism and Maoism. It is worth mentioning that other notable Russians who share Solzhenitsyn's general perspective, including academician I.R. Shafarevich, the author of *The Socialist Phenomenon*, do not consider Fascism and National Socialism as "right-wing" or "conservative" movements (as they are generally regarded in the West) but rather as varieties of left-wing collectivist movements, types of socialism closely akin to communism.

Similarly, I could not find any direct reference to Solzhenitsyn's reputed preference for monarchy as opposed to republicanism. However, in his essay "Repentance and Self-Limitation in the Life of Nations," in *From Under the Rubble*, he characterizes "the whole Petersburg period" in Russia as one of "external greatness, of imperial conceit." He considers that the Imperial Russian government managed "to preserve serfdom for a

century or more after it had become unthinkable, keeping the greater part of our own people in a slavery which robbed them of all human dignity." He notes that in "what we may call the neo-Muscovite," i.e., Soviet period, "the conceit of the preceding Petersburg period has become grosser and blinder."

In general, whatever idealization of a previous period of Russian monarchy which may exist seems to be directed toward pre-Petrine Muscovy, which, in his essay "The Courage to See" (*Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1980), he terms "the virtual antithesis" of St. Petersburg Russia.

As an illustration, in his view of pre-Petrine Russia Solzhenitsyn speaks favorably of the then-existing proto-parliamentary institution of the Zemskiy Sobor (Assembly of the Land), whose decisions, he says, "while not legally binding on the tsar" were "morally incontestable." The Zemskiy Sobor of 1612, which elected the first Romanov tsar and ended the "Time of Troubles," arranged, according to the historian S.V. Utechin, to meet regularly; at first its members were appointed by various nobility, clergy, and local assemblies, but later they were elected (by whom Utechin does not say). The Zemskiy Sobor as an institution was abolished by Peter the Great. Peter, the founder of Imperial Russia, is viewed negatively by Solzhenitsyn: in "The Mortal Danger" he says that "nationally-minded Russians" regard Peter as an "object of censure" and notes that in the popular folklore he was considered "an anti-Christ"; one of Solzhenitsyn's co-contributors to *From Under the Rubble*, the dissident historian Vadim Borisov, calls Peter "the first Russian Nihilist."

In addition to his putative sympathy for "fascism" and "monarchism," there is a common perception that there is something at least vaguely anti-Semitic about Solzhenitsyn. This is somewhat puzzling in that neither Jews nor issues specifically relating to Jews figure prominently in his works, which are mostly, as one might expect, on Russian themes. Such Jewish characters as do exist — for

instance Rubin in *The First Circle* (the honest, idealistic Jewish Communist, patterned after Lev Kopelev); the fellow exile identified only as M\_\_\_\_\_z in *The Gulag Archipelago*, volume III; and the "highly intelligent and respected" engineer Ilya Isakovich Arkhangorodsky from *August 1914* — are usually portrayed in a positive light.

It has been suggested that Solzhenitsyn, along with other (usually unidentified) members of what can be loosely described as the Russian patriotic or nationalist movement, "blames" the Revolution and its catastrophic consequences on the Jews, considering it something perpetrated on Russia by non-Russians in general, Jews in particular. However, to the extent that Solzhenitsyn concerns himself with ethnically non-Russian, including Jewish, contributors to the Revolution, his goal seems to be to demonstrate that communism is not an inherently Russian phenomenon — as it is often taken to be — but one which representatives of other peoples had a big part in shaping as well. Nonetheless, in "Repentance and Self Limitation" he accepts Russia's collective responsibility for the multimillion death toll of Soviet repression in that country:

... we, all of us, Russia herself, were the necessary accomplices. [Emphasis in original.]

Later in the same essay he states:

This article has not been written to minimize the guilt of the Russian people. Nor, however, to scrape all the guilt from mother earth and load it onto ourselves. True, we were not vaccinated against the plague. True, we lost our heads. True, we gave way, and then caved in altogether. All true. But we have not been the first and only begetters in all this time since the fifteenth century! [The reference to the fifteenth century represents Solzhenitsyn's view that modern totalitarianism is the logical culmination of philosophical trends beginning at that time.]

As Shafarevich, who also contributed to



*Rubble*, puts it in his essay "Separation or Reconciliation? The Nationalities Question in the USSR":

We have all had a hand in creating the problem that now confronts us: the Russian Nihilists, the Ukrainian "Borotbists," the Latvian riflemen and many others have each done their bit. How can we hope, separately, to disentangle the knot we all helped to tighten?

A theme related to the Jews/Revolution question is the extent to which Russian patriotism is inherently anti-Semitic. Michael Agursky, another of the contributors to *Rubble* and a self-described Jewish nationalist now resident in Israel, addressed this issue both generally and with regard to Solzhenitsyn personally in the article "Russian Isolationism and Communist Expansion" in the journal *Russia*:

But no matter what the Russian roots of the revolution were like, not only anti-semites and monarchists have pointed to the mass Jewish participation in the revolution. . . .

But many Russian nationalists, including Solzhenitsyn himself, occupy a position in the question of the participation of Jewish revolutionaries in the Russian revolution which scarcely differs from that of Zionism, calling for Jews to refuse to participate in social movements in other countries and to devote themselves to the building of their own national home. Many Jews had a heavy presentiment of what the Trotskys, Zinovyevs and Sverdlovs would lead the Jews to in Russia.

Not without reason does Solzhenitsyn, who has been falsely accused of anti-semitism, relate sympathetically to Zionism and to the State of Israel, and he has spoken out on this problem many times. And for me this is much more important than his attitude towards the Jewish and non-Jewish revolutionaries and leaders of the Soviet state in its first period.

Notwithstanding his favorable attitude

toward Israel and Zionism, Solzhenitsyn has been criticized for not being more concerned with the question of Jewish emigration:

How can the problems of any major country be reduced to the issue of who is allowed to depart from it? (from "Mortal Danger")

Solzhenitsyn's determination to view events from a specifically Russian perspective no doubt has an influence here; his concern, like charity, begins at home: *his* religion persecuted, *his* nation stagnating demographically. That is, he seems to have no objection to Jews' reasserting their Jewish identity, and he would certainly encourage them to do so. But his duty, as a Russian, is to be primarily concerned with Russia and Russians. He rejects the notion that Russian patriotism may be manipulated by the Soviet regime for evil purposes:

But then the Soviet authorities also try to exploit the Jewish emigration from the U.S.S.R. in order to fan the flames of anti-Semitism, and not without success. ("See that? They're the only ones allowed to escape from this hell, and the West sends goods to pay for it!") Does it follow that we are entitled to advise Jews to forgo the quest for their spiritual and national origins? Of course not. Are we not all entitled to live our natural life on the earth and to strive toward our individual goals, without heed for what others may think or what the papers may write, and without worrying about the dark forces that may attempt to exploit those goals for their own ends? (from "Mortal Danger")

Finally, it should not be ignored that the Soviet regime, trying to discredit Russian patriotism, has since the mid-1970s itself attempted to foster the notion that Solzhenitsyn is an anti-Semite. However, prior to this (in 1971-1973), they had attempted to give the impression that Solzhenitsyn was himself Jewish:

There was a time when they happily made play with my patronymic, Isayevich. They would say, trying to seem casual: "Incidentally, his real name is Solzhenitser or Solzhenitsker; not, of course, that this is of any importance in our country." (from the memoir *The Oak and The Calf*)

Later,

... the *racial* line was again revived. Or more precisely, the Jewish line. A special major of state security named Blagovidov rushed off to check the personal files of all the "Isaakii's" in the archives of Moscow University for 1914 in the hope of proving that I was Jewish. . . .

Alas, the racist researchers were thwarted: I turned out to be a Russian. (from *The Oak and The Calf*)

But by the time the Russian writer Vladimir Voinovich was called in for a "chat" with the KGB in mid-1975, the line had changed:

From Marchenko we switch to Solzhenitsyn. In my letter to the Writers' Union I had called him a very great citizen. But they find he is not a very great citizen. He is a bad man and an anti-Semite (VV's note: "Previously he was counted a Jew.") to boot. And in general his ideas — orthodoxy, autocracy, national character — well, all doors are shut to these nowadays. (from "Incident at the Metropole (Facts Resembling a Detective Story)," in *Kontinent 2*)

In addition to the allegation of anti-Semitism — as if the KGB were in a position to call anyone anti-Semitic — it is interesting to note the references to "autocracy" and "national character," which are likewise absent from Solzhenitsyn's writings. One is tempted to wonder to what extent the attribution of certain views to Solzhenitsyn derives ultimately from KGB sources.

In conclusion, it does not appear that there is anything in Solzhenitsyn's views

which is specifically incompatible with democratic principles or with "the autonomy of the individual" and the protection of "civil and political liberties." In addition, many of the negative characterizations commonly attributed to him appear to be groundless.

It is still to be explained, then, why his detractors, particularly liberal detractors, view him so negatively. No doubt Solzhenitsyn's indictment of the West's weakness is a discomfort to those who have devoted their professional lives to making it weak, an endeavor in which liberals have been at least as active as conservatives during these past thirty years of declining American power. Similarly, far too many liberals regard the idea of active resistance to communism as some sort of dangerous provocation, a threat to "peace."

However, there seems to be more to it. No one who has made an honest examination of Solzhenitsyn's works could find in them any indication of "fascism," "anti-Semitism," or the like. Rather, these characterizations have all the appearance of having been thrown up as diversions from what one suspects is the true reason liberals dislike Solzhenitsyn: the fact that the power of his vision and the values that embody it expose the hollowness of contemporary liberalism. Indeed, even Solzhenitsyn's attacks on communism are a source of discomfort, for most liberals know, or at least understand instinctively, that they and the Communists ultimately worship at the altar of the same secular pantheon: Man, Progress, Reason, among other gods. They both seek to build the same earthly paradise; they differ only in their methodology. Solzhenitsyn's reminder that man and society cannot survive without God, that the twentieth century has become a slaughterhouse precisely because "men have forgotten God," is anathema to them. And because they are unable to refute him, they slander him.

And perhaps this should not come as a surprise. As the Romans said: *Veritas odium parit*. Truth purchaseth hatred.

# *The Physics of Impetus and the Impetus of the Koran*

Stanley L. Jaki

IN TWO SHORT years from now we shall be at the threshold of 1987, a year which undoubtedly will have as one of its chief events the celebration of the 300th anniversary of Newton's *Principia*. Three hundred years after its publication the *Principia* is still the most important scientific book ever published. In fact, in a sense it marked the beginning of exact science on a grand scale. There was, of course, plenty of science before Newton. Of the three laws of motion, which support the vast edifice of the *Principia*, Newton could claim only one, the third, as his own, and even that only in part. He would have credited Galileo with the law of acceleration and, had he not been ill-disposed toward Descartes, he might have referred to him as the author of the first and second laws. Newton deserved all the credit for putting the three laws in the order in which we find them on the very first page of the *Principia*. The force law is the third, because as an equation it is an action-reaction statement and therefore presupposes the second law. As to the notion of acceleration in that same third law, it presupposes the notion of inertial rectilinear motion, which is what the first law is about.

In a sense, therefore, the whole edifice of physics and of exact science rests on the first law. By ascribing it to Descartes,

Newton would not have been entirely wrong. Descartes spoke indeed of linear inertial motion. He even assumed that, hypothetically speaking, such a movement would continue into infinity. But such a movement was impossible in the universe of Descartes. There the major motions were all circular and were confined to within one stellar domain or solar system. For Galileo, too, the inertial motion was circular when it came to the celestial regions, that is, to the moon and the planets. Galileo did not speak of the motion of stars, nor did Newton for that matter. Contrary to countless statements to be found everywhere in the literature, technical and popular, for Newton the material universe was finite. Although that universe was floating in an infinite space, its material particles, stars or atoms, were not supposed to stray into infinity. In other words, when Newton said that a body would indefinitely continue its inertial motion along a straight line, he did not mean actual infinity. It was only in the nineteenth century that the inertial motion as an infinite straight line was taken in a realist sense, but not for long. All permissible paths of motion are more or less curved in the universe as interpreted in Einstein's general theory of relativity.

In view of this the inertial motion as formulated by Buridan and Oresme in the