

# Statesmanship

ESSAYS IN HONOR OF  
SIR WINSTON SPENCER CHURCHILL

*Edited by*

Harry V. Jaffa

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# Solzhenitsyn

Edward J. Erler

It will never be known what acts of cowardice have been motivated by the fear of not looking sufficiently progressive.<sup>1</sup>

IT WAS ALMOST INEVITABLE THAT WESTERN INTELLECTUALS would sooner or later become disaffected with Solzhenitsyn. While it was impossible not to admire the courage of an individual resisting the oppressions of a totalitarian regime, Solzhenitsyn's work had always appeared somewhat anomalous. His preoccupation with Russian tradition and orthodoxy did not seem to be quite consistent with his own actions in defiance of the Soviet government. These suspicions were "confirmed" with the publication of his *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*.<sup>2</sup> Since the publication of this work it has been possible, at last, to unmask and expose the "real Solzhenitsyn." As a result of this unmasking, Solzhenitsyn has been charged with perhaps the highest crime that can be levied against an intellectual. He has been exposed as a reactionary who opposes the "progressive forces of history."

Perhaps the most vituperative attack on Solzhenitsyn is Jeri Laber's "The Real Solzhenitsyn."

The full text of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Open Letter to the Soviet Leaders* was first published on March 3 [1974] by the *London Times*, which described it as "a testament of astonishing power, with uncanny relevance to our own problems in the West." In its introduction the *Times* glossed over the authentically reactionary nature of Solzhenitsyn's political statements. . . . Many Western admirers of his fight against despotism had considered Solzhenitsyn an advocate of liberal values . . . and had refused to acknowledge what should have been evident from a careful reading of his fiction and his earlier political pronouncements.<sup>3</sup>

Laber finds the "real" Solzhenitsyn—despite "the typical image of a freedom-fighter and Nobel Prize winner"—to be "an authentic reactionary [who]

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1. Charles Peguy, 1910. Cited in John Lukacs, 1945: *Year Zero, The Shaping of the Modern Age* (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1978), p. 186.

2. Translated by Hilary Sternberg (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); the letter was written in September, 1973, and sent to leading members of the Soviet government. Its existence was kept secret at that time. After his exile Solzhenitsyn made a modified version of the letter available to the Western press.

3. *Commentary*, 57 (May, 1974), p. 32; see also Laber's article "The Selling of Solzhenitsyn," *Columbia Journalism Review*, 13 (June, 1974), pp. 4-7.

longs for a return to Russian Orthodoxy and to the values with which 'Russia lived for a thousand years.'"<sup>4</sup> Laber, of course, could never imagine an "authentic reactionary" to be someone who could possibly have a legitimate or viable view of politics. Whatever is "reactionary" is for her *ipso facto* unthinkable. One would suppose, however, that the assessment of one's "reaction" to something would depend, in large part at least, on what it is that one is reacting to. An unthinking commitment to "change" or "progress" merely in the belief that what is newer is better is as unsupportable as an unthinking commitment to the prevention of change or progress in the belief that what is older is always better.<sup>5</sup> A more "authentic" position would be one which was prepared to consider the possibility, however utopian it might appear, that under certain circumstances a return to traditional values might be desirable. Laber's view of Solzhenitsyn is too simplistic. It fails to take into account the unique complexities of Soviet political life and the part that Solzhenitsyn has played in exposing those complexities to the West.

## II.

David Horowitz has written that "it may almost be doubted that [the politics of Solzhenitsyn] have any immediate reference to left-right politics as they exist in the West. In part, this is because of the censored intellectual and political environment in which Solzhenitsyn and his compatriots have been compelled to form their ideas. In part, it is because of the peculiar, contradictory and hybrid nature of Soviet society itself, which combines elements of progressive Marxism with the attitudes and practices of a Russian despotism that was overthrown but not uprooted in the course of the revolutionary struggle."<sup>6</sup> Whereas Horowitz believes that "progressive Marxism" is opposed to "the attitudes and practices of Russian despotism," Solzhenitsyn believes that the importation of Marxism into Russia, far from rooting out Russia's despotic traditions, has exacerbated and exaggerated those traditions to a degree which has made human life almost unlivable in the Soviet Union. Marxism has added a purpose, or, if you will, the dignity of principle, to the Oriental despotism which has always been a part of Russian tradition. In the old fashioned, that is, non-ideological, despotism, the will of the particular despot was the core of his rule. The only restraints on the despot's rule were dictated by the parameters of his individual power. Under some circumstances this restraint was great and under others it was practically non-existent. A despotism which is inspired by Marxist ideology, however, is restrained only by the vision of perfect human beings living in a perfect

4. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

5. Cf. Solzhenitsyn, "As Breathing and Consciousness Return," in Solzhenitsyn, *et al.* (eds.), *From Under the Rubble* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1975), pp. 12-13.

6. "Solzhenitsyn and the Radical Cause," *Ramparts*, 12 (June, 1974), p. 46.

society. And certainly from the Marxist point of view moderation in the pursuit of perfection must always be considered a vice.<sup>7</sup>

R.H. Crossman, the noted Plato scholar, remarked that he had once been briefly interested in Communism: "Marxism seemed to offer the completion of the Platonic political philosophy which was my main study."<sup>8</sup> And, indeed, at first glance Marx's communism seems to be a page taken from Plato's *Republic*. But from the only point of view that matters, that of practice, the differences between Plato and Marx are crucial. The communism of Plato's *Republic* was not intended as a handbook for political action, but, on the contrary, was intended by way of a comic *reductio ad absurdum* to be a demonstration of the *limits* of political life. But Marx, apparently not knowing the history of political philosophy as well as he might, took the *Republic* to be a modern utopia and, as such, a blueprint for politics. Marx took Plato's demonstration of the limitations of political life to be a demonstration of its *unlimited* character. The lesson that he missed or ignored was that a radical gulf exists between theory and practice, a gulf that can be spanned, insofar as it can be, only by a political prudence which takes into account the limitations of practice when seen from the point of view of theory. Marx's German gravity apparently made him oblivious to Plato's cosmic humor. And, surely, the world has paid a terrible price for this singular lack of humor.

For Solzhenitsyn, the Oriental brutality that has characterized Soviet rule since 1918 is not an accidental feature of twentieth-century Marxism, but a necessary and unexpungable ingredient of an ideology which attempts to translate theory directly into practice. And it is precisely the unwillingness to accept prudential limitations on political practice that gives rise to the massive terror and violence which have been practiced with such ideological assiduity in the Soviet Union.

A great many Western intellectuals have looked upon the despotism of the Soviet Union as almost a part of the necessary process of overcoming Russia's despotic past and achieving ideological maturity. And while it almost seemed contradictory that a despotic past could be eliminated under the aegis of despotism, the most intellectual parts of the West took comfort in the knowledge that these minor contradictions have a way of working themselves out through the process of history. The late Professor Strauss described the situation with characteristic precision:

For some time, it appeared to many teachable Westerners—to say nothing of the unteachable ones—that Communism was only a parallel movement to the Western movement; as it were, a somewhat impatient, wild, wayward twin who was bound

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7. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation* V-VII, trans. Harry Willetts (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), pp. 78-97.

8. *The God That Failed* (New York: Harper and Row, 1949), p. 7.

to become mature, patient and gentle. . . . For some time, it seemed sufficient to say that while the Western movement agrees with Communism regarding the goal of the universal prosperous society of free and equal men and women, it disagrees with it regarding the means. For Communism, the end, the common good of the whole human race, being the most sacred thing, justifies any means. Whatever contributes to the achievement of the most sacred end partakes of its sacredness and is, therefore, itself sacred.<sup>9</sup>

But, continues Strauss, the mistake of the West is to see this difference regarding means and ends as merely a difference of degree and not one of kind. For the difference is precisely one regarding political morality, the choice of means and ends.

For a time Stalinism was regarded as a tolerable, if regrettable, display of impatience on the part of Communist Russia. With the passing of Stalin, it was thought, this impatient anger of the Soviet Union for its non-Communist past would also pass. The closer it came to achieving its ideals the less it would be preoccupied with its past and could begin to look confidently and, therefore, liberally towards its future. And, indeed, the "liberalizations" of the Khrushchev era seemed only to confirm this. After Khrushchev's speech to the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, in which the official de-Stalinization campaign was initiated in an effort to restore Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, Stalinism was thought to be revealed for what it was, an aberration of the ideals of Marxism-Leninism.

Solzhenitsyn, however, has made a frontal attack on this way of thinking which panders, wittingly or unwittingly, to the Potemkin facade—"the bright sham disguising the drab or ugly reality"<sup>10</sup>—that the Soviet Union has exposed to the view of the West since 1918. The radical character of Solzhenitsyn's attack does not consist in the revelation of what everyone had always known or suspected, that the slave labor camps and the brutal and arbitrary system of justice existed before Stalin and continued as a matter of course after Stalin. Rather, Solzhenitsyn's radical revelations consist in the fact that he traces the violence and terrors of Russia's past half century, *not* to the peculiarities of Stalinism, but to Marxist-Leninist ideology. Stalinism, according to Solzhenitsyn, was merely the actualization of the potential which was contained in Marxism-Leninism. It was set in motion and reached full vigor in a manner wholly consistent with that potential. "In my pre-prison and prison years I, too, had long ago come to the conclusion that Stalin had set the course of the Soviet state in a fateful direction. But then Stalin died quietly—and did the ship of state change course very noticeably? The personal, individual imprint he left on events consisted of dismal

9. Leo Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), pp. 4-5.

10. Abraham Rorberg, *Aleksander Solzhenitsyn: The Major Novels* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 11; *The Gulag Archipelago V-VII*, p. 503.

stupidity, petty tyranny, self-glorification. And in all the rest he followed the beaten path exactly as it has been sign-posted, step by step."<sup>11</sup>

The sectarianism of Stalin, which Lukacs says was the central feature of the "cult of personality,"<sup>12</sup> in Solzhenitsyn's view, is merely derivative of the Marxist-Leninist attempt to substitute ideology for morality.<sup>13</sup> According to Lukacs, "it is characteristic of sectarianism that it discards all categories of mediation—one might say, on principle. Thus, for sectarianism the realization of general or ultimate principles is not at all the result of socio-historical development. . . . Sectarianism always and everywhere attaches particular actions directly to the movement's ultimate—and thus necessarily abstract—principles."<sup>14</sup> It is this sectarianism which distinguishes Stalinism from both Marxism and Leninism. "The Stalinist tendency is always to abolish, wherever possible, all intermediate factors, and to establish an immediate connection between the crudest factual data and the most general theoretical propositions. The contrast between Lenin and Stalin is particularly obvious here. Lenin distinguished very scrupulously between theory, strategy and tactics and always examined meticulously and took into account all the mediating factors between them. . . ."<sup>15</sup> Solzhenitsyn reveals that, while Stalin may have been slightly more impatient than Lenin, Lenin's "mediating factors" certainly did not include respect for human rights or human welfare any more than did Stalin's sectarianism.

For Marx and Lenin, morality—the choice of means—is merely a by-product or rationalization for existing class relationships and therefore only a transient feature of history. Morality, which claims to be based on a permanent hierarchy of human ends, is replaced in Marx (and Lenin) by "historical consciousness," the belief that man has no permanent nature and therefore no permanent ends. In the "final" Marxian state, all human potential will be actualized. In a celebrated passage in *The German Ideology* Marx, in his only attempt to describe the "final" state, remarks that:

in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing to-day and another to-morrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.

11. *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation I-II*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 613; cf. "As Breathing and Consciousness Return," p. 12.

12. Cf. George Lukacs, "Reflections on the Cult of Stalin," in *Marxism and Human Liberation*, E. San Juan, Jr. (ed.) (New York: Dell Publishing Co.), pp. 61-71 and "Reflections on the Sino-Soviet Dispute," in *ibid.*, pp. 72-96.

13. Cf. *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, p. 39.

14. "Reflections on the Sino-Soviet Dispute," p. 78.

15. "Reflections on the Cult of Stalin," p. 66.

When all human potential becomes actual, it is, of course, no longer necessary to choose or discriminate among the different potentials. Morality, which is now merely a means of conserving existing class relationships and therefore reactionary, will be superfluous in the final state.

Hannah Arendt wrote that "all ideologies contain totalitarian elements."<sup>16</sup> The reason, Arendt indicates, is that ideology attempts to substitute history for nature or natural right as the animating principle of politics. Ideological regimes are thus prepared to sacrifice everyone's immediate interests to the dialectic of history which dictates that every aspect of present existence is contradictory and only, at bottom, a *means* for a higher synthesis. Those who exist now "can only be executioners or victims of [the] inherent law [of history]. The process may decide that those who today eliminate races and individuals or the members of dying classes and decadent peoples are tomorrow those who must be sacrificed. What totalitarian rule needs to guide the behavior of its subjects is a preparation to fit each of them equally well for the role of executioner and the role of victim."<sup>17</sup>

Edward Shils indicates the role of history in the concept of ideological politics.

Ideological politics have been obsessed with totality. They have been obsessed with futurity. They have believed that sound politics require a doctrine which comprehends every event in the universe, not only in space but in time. To live from year to year and keep afloat, to solve the problems of the year and the decade are not enough for ideological politics. Ideological politicians must see their actions in the context of the totality of history. They must see themselves moving towards a culmination of history, either a new epoch, totally new in every important respect, or bringing to a glorious fulfillment a condition which has long been lost from human life. Whether totally without precedent or renewal of the long lost, the ultimate stage will be something unique in history. Everything else is a waiting and a preparation for that remote event.<sup>18</sup>

Every ideology—indeed all of modern philosophy<sup>19</sup>—has at its core some notion of progressive history. In Marxism-Leninism all history is a dialectic tending toward the final synthesis which will be the universal society of free

16. *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1958), p. 470.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 468.

18. Edward Shils, "Ideology and Civility: On the Politics of the Intellectual," in Richard H. Cox (ed.), *Ideology, Politics, and Political Theory* (Belmont, Ca.: Wadsworth Publishing Co, 1969), pp. 219-220.

19. Professor Strauss wrote that "Modern thought is in all its forms, directly or indirectly, determined by the idea of progress. This idea implies that the most elementary questions can be settled once and for all so that future generations can dispense with their further discussion, but can erect on the foundations once laid an ever-growing structure. In this way, the foundations are covered up. The only proof necessary to guarantee their solidity seems to be that the structure stands and grows." *What is Political Philosophy* (New York: The Free Press, 1959), p. 76.

and equal individuals—the homogeneous world state. But seeing the present merely as a means to the future holds tremendous consequences for political action. From the progressive point of view, the present is always defective when seen from the perspective of the final state. For the present will never partake of the perfect or final character of the end to which it is a means. History will inevitably be progressive since the present always serves, wittingly or unwittingly, as a dialectic for the final synthesis of all history.

The notion of progressive history is, I believe, the greatest cause of dehumanization that has ever existed. The belief that the historical dialectic can change not only the conditions of human existence but human nature as well inevitably makes all human beings who exist before the final synthesis of history appear radically defective or, one might say, inhuman. After all, such beings are only partly human since a fully human life can exist only in the future. Those who exist *now* bear the same resemblance to those who will exist in the future final state as an ape or a baboon to present day "human" beings.<sup>20</sup> This notion of history almost forces men to be partisan ideologues. Partisanship—one's attachment to ideological orthodoxy—is the only standard of humanness that remains in a universe in which all things are destined to pass into historical obscurity. Only partisans can regard one another as "human." And if the partisans, like everyone else, are alienated by the process of history from living a full existence, they can take comfort in the fact that they consciously play a part in the historical process which keeps them from attaining humanity.

This radical depreciation of the present, of seeing those who exist now merely as a means to some future, provides the great impetus for treating humans as if they were sub-human or partially human. And, of course, this dehumanization is a necessary prelude to the violence and terror that have been practiced with such vigor in the Soviet Union. Such violence could not be possible if the victims were regarded as fully human. It seems that political life, however "progressive," will never be able to eliminate that most primitive of all political distinctions, that between friends and enemies, where enemies are treated as sub-human or barbarian.<sup>21</sup>

The kind of ideological dehumanization that is necessarily implied in progressivism is not possible under the natural right conception of human rights. As every reader of the Declaration of Independence knows, human rights—life, liberty and pursuit of happiness—do not depend on history, but on the Laws of Nature and Nature's God. The Laws of Nature and

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20. Cf. *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation III-IV*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 503.

21. Cf. Hannah Arendt, "On Violence," in *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972), pp. 126-133; Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1976), p. 54.

Nature's God provide a non-historical insight into a permanent hierarchy of human ends. It is the abiding permanency of the Laws of Nature and Nature's God, regardless of the character of the positive laws enacted by men, which guarantees rights to human beings. Not connected to a theory of progressive history, the natural rights doctrine thus retains full consciousness of the distinction between means and ends; individual rights cannot be sacrificed now as a means to the fulfillment of some other future end. And it is this consciousness of the distinction between means and ends which forces the recognition of the limits of politics, of the prudential requirements that must mark the boundaries of any ordered and lawful regime.

### III.

In *The First Circle* Solzhenitsyn's prisoners debate the status of morality in Communist ideology. The novel is set in a "sharashka," a labor camp where prisoners do secret scientific and technical work. Most of the work consists in making technological inventions which are used by the Organs of State Security to ferret out political dissidents. Prisoners who work in the "sharashka" occupy a kind of no-man's land modeled on Dante's *Divine Comedy*. These prisoners occupy the first circle of Hell, the highest and most privileged circle. They live in paradise compared to their fellows in the forced labor camps. Yet, they must pay for their privileges: they know that as a result of their work many will be sent to their deaths. If they demur, they will fall from the first circle into the lower reaches of Hell from which few return.<sup>22</sup>

Of all the prisoners in *The First Circle* Rubin alone has remained an orthodox Communist. In fact, he may be the only consistent adherent of Communist ideology in the whole novel. At any rate, he is described as "the spokesman for progressive ideology in the sharashka."<sup>23</sup> Unlike the other prisoners, his individual fate has not shaken his ideological faith. This provides the material for an endless series of arguments with fellow prisoners. Rubin is alone, but he easily takes comfort in the belief that he has become almost an unsung martyr for the people.

His opponents, being in the majority, acted as if they were the people and as if he, Rubin, spoke for a small minority. But everything told him this was a lie. The *people* were outside prison, outside barbed wire. The people had taken Berlin, had met the Americans on the Elbe, had poured eastward in the demobilization trains, had gone to reconstruct Dneproges, put life into the Donbrass, rebuilt Stalingrad. The sense of unity with millions saved him from feeling alone in his battle against dozens.<sup>24</sup>

22. *The Gulag Archipelago III-IV*, pp. 260-261.

23. *The First Circle* trans. Thomas P. Whitney (New York: Bantam, 1969), p. 441.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 476.

When taunted by one of his opponents that he believes in the motto that the ends justify the means Rubin answers "I don't believe in it for myself. But it's different in a social sense. Our ends are the first in all human history which are so lofty that we can say they justify the means by which they've been attained." His accuser replies "Just remember: *the higher the ends, the higher must be the means!* Dishonest means destroy the ends themselves. . . . Morality shouldn't lose its force as it increases its scope!"<sup>25</sup>

But, of course, morality inevitably loses its force as it increases its scope. An individual cannot feel the same affection for "mankind" as he can for a fellow-citizen. This is the meaning of Solzhenitsyn's claim, which seems so paradoxical to the West, that Marxism is inconsistent with Russian patriotism.<sup>26</sup> Marxism is a universal perspective, it claims to be valid not for the Soviet Union alone but the world as a whole. As such it forces Russia to be outward looking, to forget the things that have set it apart.<sup>27</sup> It has, of course, cost the Soviet Union much effort and blood to attempt to eradicate its non-Communist past, to make the unreality of Russia's past conform to the realities of its Soviet future. But how is it possible, one wonders, that such "lofty goals" can inspire such brutal practice?

For Solzhenitsyn, the twentieth-century, the age of ideology, is not and cannot be the age of progress. It is, quite literally, the age of regress.

Our twentieth century has turned out to be more cruel than those preceding it, and all that is terrible in it did not come to an end with the first half. The same old caveman feeling—greed, envy, violence, and mutual hate, which along the way assumed respectable pseudonyms like class struggle, racial struggle, mass struggle are tearing our world to pieces. The caveman refusal to accept compromise has been turned into a theoretical principle and is considered to be a virtue of orthodoxy. It demands millions of victims in endless civil wars; it packs our hearts with the notion that there are no fixed universal human concepts called good and justice, that they are fluid, changing, and that therefore one must always do what will benefit one's party.<sup>28</sup>

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 468-469.

26. *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, pp. 45-46.

27. What is true of Christianity generally, that its universal perspective forces a nation to be outward looking and self-forgetting, is not true of Russian Orthodoxy in particular. Russian Orthodoxy from the beginning assimilated the formalism of Russian tradition in such a way that Christianity strengthened, rather than weakened, that tradition. The universality of Christianity therefore became, almost inexplicably, a support for Russian tradition. In the West, of course, Christianity and universal politics always went hand and hand. Cf. Steven Runciman, *The Orthodox Churches and the Secular State* (Oxford: Oxford Press, 1971), pp. 7, 9-10, 45-67; esp. Solzhenitsyn, "Repentance and Self-Limitation in the Life of Nations," in *From Under the Rubble*, pp. 115, 137; and Evgeny Barabanov, "The Schism Between the Church and the World" in *ibid.*, pp. 177-179, 184-186.

28. *Nobel Lecture*, trans. F.D. Reeve (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), p.

The twentieth-century is the cruelest of all! The second half of the century holds the prospect of being even more violent than the first! This is the inevitable result, according to Solzhenitsyn, when base human passions—envy, greed, violence—are given the dignity of universal principles. Partisanship, as we have seen, replaces the "fixed universal human concepts." Individual passions, cloaked in the guise of human struggle, hold the possibility of producing the greatest violence. The violence and terror of Solzhenitsyn's own country, branded into his consciousness and chronicled in *The Gulag Archipelago*, are perpetrated in the name of and justified by perhaps the most "progressive" ideology that ever existed. William Barrett notes that "Communism, following Marx, has . . . always exhibited a strange ambivalence; the most naively optimistic view of human nature in theory, and in practice the most brutal and cynical attitude toward human beings."<sup>29</sup>

This brutality, Solzhenitsyn suggests, must be traced directly to the existence of Marxist-Leninist ideology:

Ideology—that is what gives evildoing its long sought justification and gives the evildoer the necessary steadfastness and determination. This is the social theory which helps to make his acts seem good instead of bad in his own and others' eyes, so that he won't hear reproaches and curses but will receive praise and honors. That was how the agents of the Inquisition fortified their wills: by invoking Christianity; the conquerors of foreign lands, by extolling the grandeur of their Motherland; the colonizers, by civilization; the Nazis, by race; and the Jacobins (early and late), by equality, brotherhood, and the happiness of future generations. Thanks to ideology, the twentieth century was fated to experience evildoing on a scale calculated in the millions. This cannot be denied, nor passed over, nor suppressed.<sup>30</sup>

The possibilities for violence and terror, according to Solzhenitsyn, have immeasurably increased with the advent of ideology. The power of justification that one receives from acting out of a regard for universal principles seems to be irrefragable. Acting on behalf of a class, a religion, a race, or a party, an individual can transcend the psychological limits proscribed by calculations guided merely by a regard for individual self-interest. As a result of transcending these limits, the individual loses, for all intents and purposes, his psychological self-identity. Just as the mind on comprehending an object or concept becomes, in effect, identical with that object or concept, so dedication to an ideal makes one indistinguishable from that ideal. But in losing one's identity, one also loses his individual responsibility for actions which are undertaken in behalf of that ideal. It is no longer possible to distinguish between the individual as an agent and the ideal itself. It is the power of ideology, Solzhenitsyn suggests, that allows men to cross over the "threshold of humanity." What is a Macbeth or even an Iago, Solzhenitsyn

29. *Irrational Man* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1962), p. 273.

30. *The Gulag Archipelago I-II*, p. 174.

asks, compared to a Lenin or a Stalin? "Macbeth's self-justifications were feeble—and his conscience devoured him. Yes, even Iago was a little lamb too. The imagination and the spiritual strength of Shakespeare's evildoers stopped short at a dozen corpses. Because they had no ideology."<sup>31</sup>

In the name of an ideology which looks forward to the creation of a society of free and equal citizens, the Soviet Union has, for the past half-century, systematically denied both freedom and equality to its citizens. Virtually no one remains untouched in some way or other by the existence of the vast network of slave labor camps that Solzhenitsyn has called the Gulag Archipelago; it stands as dramatic testimony to the arbitrariness and violence that have become an integral part of Soviet life. Solzhenitsyn cites the estimates of I. A. Kurganov that, exclusive of the World Wars and calculating "civil strife and tumult alone," *sixty-six million* people have been murdered "as a result of internal political and economic 'class' extermination alone." With and without wars," Solzhenitsyn continues, Russia has "lost one third of the population it could now have had and almost half of the one it in fact has."<sup>32</sup> And "ideology bears the entire responsibility for all the bloodshed."<sup>33</sup> When one adds to this the number who have served terms in the Gulag Archipelago and survived, a number which will never be known, one understands the pervasive character of the violence and terror that have been perpetrated upon the Russian people.

This brutalization has also exacted a tremendous toll psychologically. What the long range result of this psychological brutalization will be—of the promise of freedom and equality coupled with the harsh reality of its systematic denial—is unclear. Surely nothing like it has existed on such a large scale before in history. The arbitrariness of Soviet rule (justified in the name of "higher law" or the "law of history") has completely destroyed all standards of morality in the Soviet Union. Solzhenitsyn recounts how the schizophrenic attempts of the Bolsheviks to eradicate Russia's non-Communist past at one fell swoop almost completely abolished the notion of individual guilt. From 1918 on there was virtually no one in Russia who was immune from arrest. Guilty and innocent alike were included in the various "waves" that swept into the Gulag Archipelago.<sup>34</sup> Yet the anger that was vented by the Soviet leaders in their attempt to take revenge on Russia's past was justified in terms of a "higher law," or, that is, a non-arbitrary principle. The Czarist regime, Solzhenitsyn claims, which made no pretensions to higher law, was, in fact, mild and lawful compared to Bolshevik rule. The

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31. *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.

32. *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, p. 30.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

34. Solzhenitsyn recounts that a prison guard once asked a prisoner why he had received a twenty-five year sentence. "For nothing at all," replied the prisoner. "You are a liar," taunted the guard, "for nothing at all we give ten years."

Czar, from time to time, pardoned political prisoners. According to Solzhenitsyn this has never occurred in the Soviet Union. The Soviet leaders, despite their arbitrariness, apparently feel sure of their purpose and firm in their belief that they are absolved from making mistakes by a law of history which thrives on contradiction.

#### IV.

Solzhenitsyn believes that a return to Russian tradition, an introspective turning inward, is the best strategy against Communist ideology. Russia should, he believes, abandon its global ideology and turn its attention to the development of its own northeastern land mass—"the Northeast of the European part and the North of the Asian part, and the main Siberian massif."<sup>35</sup> Such introspection will prepare Russia for a return to its traditions. Russian patriotism, Solzhenitsyn calculates, is the greatest enemy of Marxist ideology. Nineteenth-century Europe looked toward Russia with apprehension, knowing that this vast territory, displaying a curious mixture of East and West, would someday be the Colossus of Europe. The only thing that could weaken the menacing will of Russia, Nietzsche wrote, was if it were to become outward looking and lose the introspection that was the source of its strength.<sup>36</sup> This is Solzhenitsyn's view as well. Communism, with its global goal of the universal homogeneous state, has made Russia forget, to a great extent, the source of its strength. In fact, Solzhenitsyn maintains that Marxist-Leninist ideology was directly responsible for the creation of Russia's two greatest enemies in the twentieth-century, Hitler's Germany and Mao's China. These were not practical diplomatic failures, Solzhenitsyn maintains, but ideological ones—"in the first instance to harm the cause of world imperialism and, in the second, to support Communist movements abroad. In both cases *national* considerations were completely lacking."<sup>37</sup>

Yet, the Soviet Communists have not always forgotten about the power of Russian tradition. They are willing to forget ideology when occasion demands. Solzhenitsyn writes in his *Letter to the Soviet Leaders* that:

When war with Hitler began, Stalin, who had omitted and bungled so much in the way of military preparation, did not neglect *that* side, the ideological side. And although the ideological grounds for that war seemed more indisputable than those that face you now [*viz.* with China] (the war was waged against what appeared on

35. *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, p. 28; see "Repentance and Self-Limitation in the Life of Nations," pp. 141-145.

36. Cf. *Beyond Good and Evil*, 280; and Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J.P. Mayer (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1969), pp. 410-411.

37. *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, pp. 12-13.

the surface to be a diametrically opposed ideology), from the very first days of the war Stalin refused to rely on the putrid, decaying prop of ideology. He wisely discarded it, all but ceased to mention it and unfurled instead the old Russian banner—sometimes, indeed, the standard of Orthodoxy—and we conquered! (Only toward the end of the war and after the victory was the Progressive Doctrine taken out of its mothballs.)<sup>38</sup>

Solzhenitsyn predicts that if a similar discarding of ideology does not occur before the impending war with China, not only Russia, but the last vestiges of Western civilization will disappear.

Solzhenitsyn knows, however, that the Russian tradition is not a tradition of freedom. It is one of obligation rather than rights. Leonid Ignatieff has written that:

In Russia . . . as a result of Mongolian and Byzantine influences, the supremacy of the ruler became the tradition. Western doctrines of government led to emphasis on rights, whereas Russian ones emphasized obligations. This variance is one of the basic differences between Russia and the West.<sup>39</sup>

Solzhenitsyn does not believe, however, that Russian tradition is inconsistent with the establishment of freedom. Freedom of religion, speech and press, he believes, can all be beneficial to Russia. This freedom will not have an ideological basis, however; it will somehow be rooted in the soil of Russian tradition.

The Western concept of freedom is essentially anti-tradition or anti-authoritarian. Liberty and authority are seen as the mutually exclusive poles of political existence. This expression of modern liberalism finds its most explicit beginning in the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes' liberty was founded in opposition to the morality of the tradition that had preceded him—the Aristotelian tradition. For this tradition, liberty consisted in doing what the law *prescribed*. There was no notion that liberty found its existence essentially outside the prescription of law. Hobbes' formulation is that liberty consists in doing whatever the law or the Sovereign does not *proscribe*. Thus, outside the minimal requirements of political and social order, liberty knows no bounds except the value determining mechanism of the free market. Like Rousseau before him, Solzhenitsyn casts a backward glance at the tradition which was attacked by modern liberalism. Solzhenitsyn dreams of what he calls "moral freedom," a freedom which is opposed to libertarianism.

Yes, of course: freedom is moral. But only if it keeps within certain bounds, beyond which it degenerates into complacency and licentiousness.

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38. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18; cf. Robert H. McNeal, *The Bolshevik Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1975), pp. 117-118.

39. Leonid Ignatieff, "Rights and Obligations in Russia and the West," *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 1957, p. 26; see Tocqueville, note 36 above.

And order is not immoral if it means a calm and stable system. But order, too, has its limits, beyond which it degenerates into arbitrariness and tyranny.<sup>40</sup>

It has been said that Solzhenitsyn "has a healthy scepticism about the essential relevance of Western concepts to Russian reality."<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Solzhenitsyn looks upon Marxist ideology as an alien invader from the West that rushed full force against the barricades of Eastern tradition.<sup>42</sup> But the same ideology, Solzhenitsyn believes, has contributed greatly to the weakening of the West as well. "The catastrophic weakening of the Western world and the whole of Western civilization is by no means due solely to the success of an irresistible, persistent Soviet foreign policy. It is, rather, the result of a historical, psychological and moral crisis. . . ."<sup>43</sup> Historical consciousness, born in Germany, has conquered the West in a way that never could have been accomplished by German military might alone. According to Professor Strauss, "It would not be the first time that a nation, defeated on the battlefield and, as it were, annihilated as a political being, has deprived its conquerors of the most sublime fruit of victory by imposing on them the yoke of its own thought."<sup>44</sup> Historical consciousness has made the West unsure of its once sure purpose. The natural right tradition in the West has given way to "ideology"—the ideology of progress—which no longer regards natural right as the core of Western Civilization, but merely one ideology among many. This crisis, Solzhenitsyn believes, has brought "the West to its knees." "The Western world, as a single, clearly united force, no longer counter-balances the Soviet Union, indeed has almost ceased to exist. . . . For no external reasons, the victorious powers [of World War Two] have grown weak and effete."<sup>45</sup>

Solzhenitsyn writes about a kind of moral hypocrisy that has arisen in the West as a result of its immersion in ideology. This is the hypocrisy of the Western intellectuals who see the political world in terms of an exclusive ideological opposition between peace and war. Solzhenitsyn suggests that this antithesis is misplaced, that the real opposition is not between peace and war, but between peace and violence.

The opposition of "peace and war" contains a logical error in the sense that the entire thesis (peace) is opposed to only part of the antithesis (war). War is a massive, dense, loud and vivid phenomenon, but it is far from being the only manifestation of a never-ceasing, all encompassing world-wide violence. The only opposition that is logically equivalent and morally true is: Peace and Violence.<sup>46</sup>

40. *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, p. 51.

41. Rothberg, p. 130.

42. Cf. *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, pp. 18, 41.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

44. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 2.

45. *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, p. 11; cf. p. 43.

46. "Peace and Violence," *New York Times*, September 15, 1973, p. 31.

This kind of ideological thinking, according to Solzhenitsyn, encourages the same kind of confusion of means and ends that has already been discussed. Most particularly, it tolerates violence and even justifies it in terms of peace itself. In the words of one celebrated humanist, "the question is not to know whether one accepts or rejects violence, but whether the violence with which one is allied is 'progressive' and tends toward its own suspension or toward self-perpetuation and finally, that in order to decide this question the crime has to be set in the logic of a situation, in the dynamics of a regime and into the historical totality to which it belongs, instead of judging it by itself according to that morality mistakenly called 'pure morality.'"<sup>47</sup>

It is this double standard—the toleration of violence with the proper ideological credentials—that Solzhenitsyn condemns.

The error committed by man in his understanding of the meaning of "peace" is nothing but emotional. . . . The truth has long been demonstrated and proved and explained, and yet it has remained without attention or sympathy, like Orwell's *1984*, because of a "universal conspiracy of adulation". . . . The bestial mass killings of Hue, though reliably proved, were only lightly noticed and almost immediately forgiven because the sympathy of society was on the other side, and the inertia could not be disturbed.<sup>48</sup>

Solzhenitsyn does not hold much prospect for a world that tolerates terror and violence under the guise of universal ideology.

There seems to be little doubt, as many now realize, that what is going on in the U.S.S.R. is not simply something happening in one country, but a foreboding of the future of man, and therefore deserving the fullest attention of Western observers . . . it is not any difficulties of perception that the West is suffering, but a desire not to know, an emotional preference for the pleasant over the unpleasant. Such an attitude is governed by the spirit of Munich, the spirit of complaisance and concession, and by the cowardly self-deception of comfortable societies and people who have lost the will to live a life of deprivation, sacrifice and firmness.<sup>49</sup>

## V.

Russian writers, Solzhenitsyn believes, have a great responsibility in reestablishing and clarifying the Russian tradition in a way which will make it consistent with the existence of freedom. Freedom is a rare plant in the East; only the strongest nourishment will make it flourish. Solzhenitsyn believes that the soil of Russia, if properly cultivated, can provide that nourishment. "Literature," Solzhenitsyn writes in his *Nobel Lecture*, "becomes the living memory of a nation. What has faded into history it thus

47. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror*, trans. John O'Neill (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 1-2.

48. "Peace and Violence," p. 31.

49. *Ibid.*

keeps warm and preserves in a form that defies distortion and falsehood. Thus literature, together with language, preserves and protects a nation's soul. . . .<sup>50</sup>

The officially sanctioned literature of socialist realism is, of course, a recognition of the great power of literature. Socialist realism is, not unexpectedly, primarily an attempt to destroy Russian tradition.<sup>51</sup> Communist ideology depends upon its destruction. In *The First Circle*, one of the characters, a party official who is later arrested and imprisoned, says: "but then why have literature at all? After all, a writer is a teacher of the people; surely that's what we've always understood? And a greater writer—forgive me, perhaps I shouldn't say this, I'll lower my voice—a greater writer is, so to speak, a second government. That's why no regime anywhere has ever loved its great writers, only its minor ones."<sup>52</sup> Like Socrates' claim that despite having no political office he was the true ruler of Athens, Solzhenitsyn makes the same claim for the Russian literary tradition.

No one, including Solzhenitsyn, really knows the chances of Russia reviving its traditions. We cannot avoid noting that probably even in Solzhenitsyn's own view the prospect is remote. His thoroughgoing critique of both Soviet Communism and Western liberalism leaves him with few, if any, alternatives. Solzhenitsyn knows that the twentieth-century is the age of universal politics. But he is adamant in his belief that the revival of Russian tradition is the strongest strategy to oppose Soviet Communism. The opposition cannot be made on Western terms however. It has to be a much more radical opposition. The political order consistent with Russian tradition will not be modeled on Western democracy. That kind of political order is not consistent with the maintenance and nurture of tradition. Here we come to the source of Laber's diatribe against Solzhenitsyn—"he believes in benevolent authoritarianism."

It is not authoritarianism [Solzhenitsyn writes] that is intolerable, but the ideological lies that are daily foisted upon us. Not so much authoritarianism as arbitrariness and illegality. . . . 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 the will of the people. . . . The soviets, which gave their name to our system and existed until July 6, 1918, were in no way dependent upon Ideology, they always envisaged the widest possible consultation with the people.<sup>53</sup>

50. *Nobel Lecture*, p. 19; cf. "Letter to the Fourth Congress of Soviet Writers," in John B. Dunlop, et al. (eds.), *Alexander Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (Belmont, Mass., 1963), p. 464.

51. Lukacs' claim that Solzhenitsyn discovered a new genre of socialist realism seems particularly ludicrous now after the publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* and the *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*. Apparently Lukacs made the same mistake as Khrushchev when he authorized the publication of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Cf. Georg Lukacs, *Solzhenitsyn*, trans. William Graf (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 10ff. 33-35 and Irving Howe, "Lukacs and Solzhenitsyn," *Dissent* (December, 1971), pp. 643-647.

52. *The First Circle*, p. 415.

53. *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, pp. 53-54; cf. "As Breathing and Consciousness Return," p. 22-25.

"Here in Russia," Solzhenitsyn continues,

for sheer lack of practice, democracy survived for only eight months—from February to October, 1917. The émigré 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 were 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.<sup>54</sup>

A *sudden* reintroduction of democracy *now* would be unwise. Some form of "authoritarianism," Solzhenitsyn believes, based on the rule of law instead of ideology would be tolerable as a transition form of government. In this regard, Solzhenitsyn mentions the moribund Soviet Constitution, along with a revitalization of the soviets, as the possible constitutional basis for a transition government.

Would it be still within the bounds of realism or a lapse into daydreams if we were to propose that at least some of the real power of the soviets be restored? I do not know what can be said on the subject of our Constitution: from 1936 it has not been observed for a single day, and for that reason does not appear to be viable. But perhaps even the Constitution is not beyond all hope?<sup>55</sup>

Solzhenitsyn also proposes to leave the party leadership structure intact for the present, as long as it can be made consistent with the rule of law. Gradual change will avoid the repetition of lamentable errors of the Kerensky regime and, we might add, those of the Weimar Republic as well.<sup>56</sup> Solzhenitsyn remarks that:

from my experience of Russian history I have become an opponent of all revolutions and all armed convulsions, including future ones—both those you crave (*not* in our country) and those you fear (in our country). Intensive study has convinced me that bloody mass revolutions are always disastrous for the people in whose midst they occur. And in our present-day society I am by no means alone in that conviction. The sudden upheaval of any hastily carried-out change of the present leadership (the whole pyramid) might provoke only a new and destructive struggle and would certainly lead to only a very dubious gain in the quality of the leadership.<sup>57</sup>

What could be more unobjectionable than this realistic attempt to replace the ideological arbitrariness that reigns supreme in the Soviet Union? A liberal tradition, graced with the credentials of no less than John Stuart Mill, holds that under particular circumstances some form of authoritarian

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 56.

56. Winston S. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm* (New York: Bantam: 1961), pp. 9-10.

57. *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, p. 50.

rule may be necessary, provided the rule eventually culminates in the self-rule of those who are governed and the means of rule are reasonably calculated to effect that end. Solzhenitsyn believes that a modified form of Russian Orthodoxy will more reasonably serve that end than the dehumanizing and brutal terror that has characterized Soviet rule for the past half-century.

Solzhenitsyn's vision of Russia's future is a moderate one; it is calculated to meet the exigencies of the political realities that face him. He doesn't believe that there is any single all-encompassing formula that can provide the cure for Russia's ills. In this sense Solzhenitsyn does not have the intemperate impatience of an ideologist, but the calculating patience of a statesman who finds it necessary to tack and trim. His main strategy now is to oppose Marxist-Leninist ideology. To do this he must try to make Russia turn inward upon its soil and its traditions. Solzhenitsyn believes that if Marxist-Leninist ideology can be jettisoned, Russia can turn to the kind of political order—whatever its form—which will allow freedom to exist within the great Russian tradition. What seems so paradoxical at first sight—Solzhenitsyn's statement that Marxism-Leninism is incompatible with Russian patriotism—seems upon reflection to be perfectly logical. The return of an introspective Russia is the best strategy to combat Soviet Communism.

## VI.

In 1974 Andrei Sakharov, almost immediately upon its publication, wrote a critique of Solzhenitsyn's *A Letter to the Soviet Leaders* in which he stated that Solzhenitsyn's estimation of the importance of ideology for the Soviet leadership was "misguided." Sakharov asserts that to maintain that the "various anomalies and costly absurdities" that have characterized the Soviet regime "are directly generated by ideological causes seems to be somewhat schematic." He continues that:

I see present-day Soviet society as being marked rather by ideological indifference and the cynical use of ideology as a convenient facade . . . Stalin committed his crimes not from ideological motives but as part of the struggle for power, while he was building a new "barrack-square" type of society (as Marx called it); in the same way, the present leaders' main criterion, when facing any difficult decisions, is the conservation of their own power and of the basic features of the system.<sup>58</sup>

Thus in Sakharov's view ideology is merely a "convenient facade" used to disguise despotic power. One must indeed wonder, however, whether undisguised despotism could have the same character as disguised despotism. A "convenient facade" is obviously superior and more powerful than an in-

58. Andrei Sakharov, "On Alexander Solzhenitsyn's 'A Letter to the Soviet Leaders,'" trans. Geoffrey Hosking, *Kontinent* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1976), p. 6.

convenient one. What, we wonder, makes Marxist ideology so "convenient," holding tremendous attractions, not indeed for the Russian people, but for the Soviet leaders and a goodly portion of the Western intelligentsia? Could it be the justification of despotism on the basis of universal principle?

Solzhenitsyn, in answer to Sakharov, speaks of the "imperious grip" of ideology that holds "our rulers."

Starting from Lenin's prerevolutionary "Lessons of the Commune" that proletarian power was to become firmly established by mass shootings, and from Lenin's hate-obsessed secret letter about the destruction of the Church; continuing through the actual annihilation of *entire classes* and tens of millions of separate individuals (what power-seekers have ever needed such a hundredfold margin of assurance to establish what power??), and through collectivization, which was economically senseless but nevertheless was an offering to be devoured by the ideological maw (it has recently been well demonstrated by Mikhail Agursky that the main purpose of collectivization was to break the soul and ancient faith of the people). And in the recent past Ideology has led our rulers to the diffusion—superfluous and needless to us—of Asian communism farther and farther south, and to the trampling of our allies the Czech people not for reasons of state, but merely because of an ideological rift.<sup>59</sup>

These are all incidents in Soviet history which, according to Solzhenitsyn, go well beyond what is required to gain and consolidate power. *Realpolitik* needs no ideological justification.

Sakharov himself accuses Solzhenitsyn of perpetrating a kind of ideology which is "utopian and even potentially dangerous." It is Solzhenitsyn's belief, Sakharov continues:

that the Russian people can be saved through the replacement of Marxism by a healthy ideology, which he apparently considers Orthodoxy to be. This conviction underlies his whole program. But I am convinced that in reality the nationalist and isolationist tendencies of Solzhenitsyn's thought, and his own patriarchal religious romanticism, lead him into very serious errors. . . .<sup>60</sup>

Sakharov is, of course, mistaken in calling Solzhenitsyn's position "ideological." Orthodoxy is the antithesis of ideology. Russian Orthodoxy is, as we have seen, something unique to Russian soil; it is the quality which distinguishes Russia from the rest of the political universe. Russia cannot, therefore, at one and the same time be "orthodox" and the patron of a universal ideology. Sakharov's misunderstanding is perhaps best illustrated by this statement:

I find Solzhenitsyn's treatment of the problem of progress particularly misleading. Progress is a worldwide process. . . . Given universal scientific and democratic

59. "Sakharov and the Criticism of 'A Letter to the Soviet Leaders,'" trans. Barry Rubin, *Kontinent*, pp. 17-18 (emphasis original).

60. *Kontinent*, pp. 12-13.

management of the whole of social life, including population growth, this, I am quite convinced, is not a utopia but a vital necessity. Progress must continually change its immediate forms according to need, in order to meet the requirements of human society. . . .<sup>61</sup>

There is no doubt that the world homogeneous state, as Sakharov indicates, will be governed by an ideology of progress. But who can fail at this late date to see that "progress" and human progress are two different things.<sup>62</sup> This is perhaps Solzhenitsyn's most powerful message. But how difficult it is to speak of Orthodoxy in a progressive world!

A word should be said here about Solzhenitsyn's Orthodoxy, his "patriarchal religious romanticism" as Sakharov phrased it. Whatever his own private convictions, there is little doubt that Solzhenitsyn regards Orthodoxy as a *political* weapon to combat Marxist-Leninist ideology. In his remarks at Harvard University, Solzhenitsyn said that:

a decline in courage may be the most striking feature which an outside observer notices in the West in our days. The Western world has lost its civic courage, both as a whole and separately, in each country, each government, each political party, and of course in the United Nations. Such a decline in courage is particularly noticeable among the ruling groups and the intellectual elite, causing an impression that the loss of courage extends to the entire society.

It is difficult to imagine a "patriarchal religious romantic" making a plea for *civic* courage. This critique seems more in the spirit of Machiavelli than an orthodox defender of the faith who wishes to see Russia transformed into an ecclesiastical polity.

In his essay "Repentance and Self-Limitation in the Life of Nations" Solzhenitsyn speaks of "repentance" as the source of "self-limitation" in the modern world.<sup>63</sup> A Christian virtue is thus made the source of political moderation. Repentance implies that an individual or a nation can acknowledge mistakes and have that acknowledgment serve as the source of moderation and limitation. "Repentance" thus acts as a counterweight to a "progressive" ideology which views human political nature as unlimited. Orthodoxy provides perhaps the only non-ideological ground for a critique of progressive ideology that exists in the modern world. In this sense, Solzhenitsyn finds himself caught inextricably between past and future, a situation in which "the past no longer sheds light on the future, and the spirit walks in darkness."<sup>64</sup>

61. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

62. Cf. Edward Erler, "Review of Michael Oakeshott, *Hobbes on Civil Association*," *The Modern Schoolman*, 59 (March, 1977), pp. 289-292.

63. "Repentance and the Self-Limitation of Nations," p. 135.

64. Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), II, p. 336: "Je remonte de siècle en siècle jusqu'à l'antiquité la plus reculée; je n'aperçois rien qui ressemble à ce qui est sous mes yeux. Le passé n'éclairant plus l'avenir, l'esprit marche dans les ténèbres."