

"The Horror! The Horror!"

The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956, Experiment in Literary Investigation, Parts V-VII, by Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, translated from the Russian by Harry Willetts, *New York: Harper & Row, 1978. x + 558 pp. \$16.95.*

AMERICA has at last received the final parts of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's anguished trilogy. *The Gulag Archipelago* burns immense, with heat from millions of simple, innocent corpses, victims of a régime so barbarous that no words, not even Solzhenitsyn's, can possibly capture its full horror. Yet if anyone were able to approach that threshold of perception beyond which agony becomes delirium, Solzhenitsyn has surely reached it, with a genius as unprecedented as the events that he has miraculously survived to describe. And, indeed, if this is delirium, the response to a cold-blooded horror for which "madness" is too mild a name, he succeeds once more in turning the pain of tortured, hungry, frail bodies into the hope and glory that is human compassion and dignity.

Solzhenitsyn's indictment of the executioners who twisted their knives into the flesh of people whose guilt lay in a desire for prayer, or in owning a cow, or in absolutely nothing, is as thunderous as the voice of the Lord must have been to those who heard Him speak in quieter times. Spelled in the blood of men and women fated to eternal silence, an inevitable question summarizes this book: Why? These final segments of *The Gulag Archipelago* are not primarily an outburst of hate but rather a testament of love. One senses that Solzhenitsyn weeps with every peasant woman who dies refusing to wear the prison numbers designed to obliterate her Christian name; with the sick prisoners who are forced to work as hard as the healthy (and perish like flies as a result); with the starving men who will not become informers despite threats and even torture; with every creature, young and old, lost in those cauldrons whose flames exceed the devastation of Hell. What is being lost, we are reminded, is the very soul

of a nation, its heart crippled, barely beating inside its iron cage.

This cage is still very much intact, as the devastation continues today. In this third book the verdict is being delivered against murderers still alive, some now retired on munificent pensions and others as active as ever in the present Soviet government. Here names are named and deeds are spelled out. We learn, not surprisingly, that Solzhenitsyn himself did not realize how little the situation had changed after Stalin. After the publication of *One Day in The Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1963), he reports, a stream of letters poured in from prisoners resenting the implication that such a novel described Stalinist atrocities alone: "What about us?" "Once more we're being put inside for nothing at all. Whose personality cult is to blame this time?" "A black mist has covered us and no one can see us." Solzhenitsyn admits that he felt ashamed, that he felt he had betrayed these people. He vowed to speak for them, too.

Even more directly than the previous two books, this last conclusively demonstrates the pervasiveness of a communist stench. Consider, for example, the war against the simple peasants, fifteen million of them. It is a war about which there are no books. Anyone who owns a two-storey house in a row of one-storey houses is given sixty minutes to leave, barefoot, for deportation to Siberia. Naturally, "the better off were sometimes left where they were, provided they joined the kolkhoz quickly, while the obstinate poor peasant who failed to apply was deported." The picture of deportation is surrealistic in horror: hundreds of thousands of people, practically naked, dumped in deserted places without food, or water, or shelter, ordered to make themselves earth houses after they have finished their daily quota of forced labor. Here is a case in point: In 1930, about 60,000 peasants, driven upstream along the Vasyugan River, over ice, were marooned in the marshes. "Neither food nor tools were left for them." They starved, every single one of them, within a few days.

Entire villages and nationalities were senselessly uprooted. The chapter entitled "Nations in Exile" should silence forever anyone skepti-

cal as to the inherent racism and irrationality of present-day communism in its policy of displacing entire ethnic groups in Siberia, to the northern Urals, and to other communal graves. Crammed into cattle cars without bathroom facilities, dying along the way, starved and smothered in their own excrement, thousands of Estonians were wiped off the face of the earth with the effectiveness, if not the merciful speed, of Auschwitz ovens. Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Crimean Tartars continue to be persecuted, their relatives' graves publicly unmourned. How can one quote the whole book? Each page is a prayer in blood, a requiem, a recognition that justice is logically impossible. One does not avenge millions.

These millions of victims numbered among them the best, the most courageous and honest of men. There were men of talent and versatility like Georgi Tenno, whose necessarily abortive escape approaches the fantastic. (Authorities at first told Tenno there were no charges against him, then tortured him so as to force from him a false confession.) There were men like the talented poet Silin, a homeless child imprisoned for believing in God. There were men like Dr. Masamed, a Romanian Jew, who taught his fellow prisoners yoga, who did not stoop to the obsequiousness required to obtain a "soft" office job in the camps but proudly worked with a pickax in fifty degrees below zero temperature in order to show mastery over his bodily needs. (He soon died from a heart attack.) There were men like Sisoyev who, after serving nine years and nine months of his "tenner" (for being a Christian), was shot from a watchtower: "Guards quickly ran over from the guardhouse and started dragging the dead man into the boundary zone to make it look as though he had trespassed on it." These events occurred in 1954, a time of countless such acts by the KGB men and prison guards meant to counter the post-Stalinist mood threatening to reduce their power and to prove that "protection" from "gangsters" was still indispensable.

Their success was met, nevertheless, with resistance from the prisoners. Sisoyev's death kindled an uproar whose seeds had been sown a long time ago in the Kengir camp. The ac-

count of that heroic protest, in which Solzhenitsyn himself had participated until his metastasizing cancer forced him into the infirmary, is breathtaking. (A paradoxical blessing, that cancer, for, though left untreated, Solzhenitsyn did at least survive the mass murder of his unarmed fellow prisoners.) As the tanks drove over the bodies of men emaciated as a result of their long hunger strike, which protested the latest stream of unexplained shootings, another chapter closed for which all of humanity must someday answer: not only those who know the dimensions of the crimes, but also those who chose to stay ignorant, as well as those in the West who are selective in their outrage and lack the courage or integrity to recognize the true implications of Marxist ideology. Consider, too, this scene from the Kengir uprising: "Women tried to shield men with their own bodies—and they too were bayoneted! Security officer Belyaev shot two dozen people with his own hand that morning; when the battle was over he was seen putting knives into the hands of corpses for the photographer to take pictures of dead gangsters." Solzhenitsyn footnotes the passage as follows: "Attention, Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre, with your War Crimes Tribunal! Attention, philosophers. Here's material for you! Why not hold a session? They can't hear me. . . ."

It is a miracle that such a book exists at all. The danger of its confiscation became even greater after the KGB raided Solzhenitsyn's apartment in 1965 and stole his papers. The danger of such material being used to persecute additional people whose names appear in its pages made it necessary for Solzhenitsyn never to leave the manuscript in any one place and to write it secretly while pretending to work on something else. He confesses that he often wondered whether he could possibly undertake such a project by himself, whether he had the stamina, whether he could do full justice to his enormous subject. Even with his ingenious efforts to remember everything—for instance, using prayer beads to help him repeat, innumerable times, events and names that would later find their place in this second Deuteronomy—Solzhenitsyn's work does not

begin to be complete. But there is enough to suggest that the price of failing to learn from these fragments may well be an epilogue written with the blood of the very people whose philosophical sessions include nothing on the Soviet holocaust, a holocaust whose contemporaries they will never again be able to deny that they are.

Perhaps it is the intellectuals, rather than the ordinary people who have a harder time understanding the simple facts in Solzhenitsyn's masterpiece. As he compares the situation of political prisoners under czarism with that of so-called "enemies of the people" in post-revolutionary Russia, he cites particulars: Under the czarist "repressive" régime he finds conspirators and agitators eating well, visiting with friends, writing books, and in general living in conditions of genuine luxury as compared with the starvation and the torture of innocent ordinary people punished under "the dictatorship of the proletariat." (The so-called "liberal" professors of history should read these passages closely!) And even without analytical training, Solzhenitsyn understands what is true public opinion: "I don't know how sociologists define it, but it seems to me that it can only consist of interacting individual opinions, freely expressed and independent of government or party opinion." (The glib higher journalists who now accuse Solzhenitsyn of anachronistic nineteenth-century "authoritarianism" have no justification for ignoring such statements.) Solzhenitsyn speaks a language truly universal, transcending system and dogma. In this connection, one last example should be mentioned, the story of an Hungarian boy picked up by the Russians in 1944. They had him sign a document that he could not read. (After 1953 he was released as "rehabilitated"—*i. e.*, innocent—without ever having been told what the original "charge" against him could possibly have been.) Hurt while in a labor camp, the boy was sent to a hospital, where his meager rations would have led to his death had it not been for a nurse, Dusya, who "used to exchange her morning ration of 300 grams for half a liter of milk in the village, and with this milk she nursed Janos back to life (as she had nursed others before

him). For this motherly woman's sake Janos came to love Russia and all Russians." Solzhenitsyn footnotes this story as follows: "Can someone explain to me what ideology this behavior fits into? (Compare the Communist medical orderly in Dyakov: Toothache, eh, you pig-faced Ukrainian bandit!)"

The concluding words of *The Gulag Archipelago* are addressed to the West: "For half a century and more the enormous state has towered over us, girded with hoops of steel. The hoops are still there. There is no law."

Reviewed by JULIANA GERAN PILON

The Corruption of the Constitution

Watergate and the Constitution, by Philip B. Kurland, *Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1978. x + 261 pp. \$12.50.*

MAKE NO MISTAKE about it, the Constitution and how we have corrupted it are the principal themes of this book. And, while those themes are frequently illustrated by citations to the events of Watergate, that sordid episode does not dominate the book. Rather, it serves as the main but not sole source of facts that collectively describe a more fundamental crisis.

According to Professor Philip B. Kurland, who is a noted scholar of the Constitution and the Supreme Court, Watergate was only the latest, if the worst, symptom of the "institutional failures" of American government: "The notion that because we have come through one critical period we have been restored to health is more wish than reality. Perhaps we have removed a cancerous growth that could have killed us. We have not rid the system of the disease." The disease suffusing our government is the crippling of the precepts of "separation of powers" and "checks and balances." "If there were two distortions of constitutional government revealed by Watergate, they were