

# Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: When Humans Have Forgotten God

By [Kenneth Francis](#) (July 2018)



*Guernica*, Pablo Picasso, 1937

Russia is in the news a lot lately. From alleged interfering in American politics to hosting the World Cup, the Great Bear always fascinates both enemies and admirers. As for its literature: no other country's past is permeated more graphically with the themes of misery and war. And nowhere are such unimaginable horrors more prominent and terrifying than in the writings of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008).

Nobel laureate, mathematician, Orthodox Christian author, and Russian dissident, he was a man who experienced firsthand the terror of existence when humans forget God. He was also an outspoken critic of the Soviet Union and the barbarism of atheistic totalitarianism. If he were alive today, he'd probably be cautiously optimistic for Mother Russia's future but pessimistic about the West.

Generation after generation, other great Russian writers like Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Gogol and Pasternak have laid bare the turmoil, repression, poverty, death, sadness and suffering of Russia's Soviet years. But none are more graphic or memorable than those penned by Solzhenitsyn.

While serving in the Russian Army in 1945, he was arrested and sent to prison for criticizing, in a letter, the Russian leader Josef Stalin. While in prison, Solzhenitsyn met Christians and was astonished at their deep faith in Christ and great strength in the harsh conditions of the gulag. It was then that he found God.

On release from prison and in exile, he was repulsed by the moral decadence of the West. However, in his most famous book and masterpiece, the non-fiction *The Gulag Archipelago*, he recalls the horrors of the Russian revolution and its aftermath (1918-1956). This madness led to tens of millions of innocent people imprisoned in forced labour camps, tortured, diseased-ridden, raped, starved and executed by a regime that hated an entity they didn't even believe in: The God of Christianity, Jesus Christ.



This essay focuses on a speech by Solzhenitsyn, reflecting both his non-fiction work and his most-famous novel, *One Day*

*in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Ivan Denisovich Shukhov has been sentenced to a camp in the Soviet gulag during World War Two. He is accused of becoming a spy, which he's not, and is sentenced to ten years in a forced labor camp. The story chronicles Ivan's day-to-day life in the squalor of the prison camp, where fellow prisoners are treated with some compassion, but mainly harshly and with cruelty in freezing conditions.

Here, survival of the fittest is exercised throughout the prison camp. The theme of the story is totalitarian oppression and survival. In his Templeton Address in London on May 10, 1983, that laid bare the evil some humans do when God is proclaimed dead, Solzhenitsyn said:

. . . If I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous Revolution that swallowed up some sixty million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: Men have forgotten God; that's why all this has happened.

In the West today, most visibly since the early-1960s, we see this happening at a rapid pace. Only this time, especially in the 21st century, it is a fascist brand of liberalism with a smiley face. The Equality Police of the New Establishment, and their dedicated proxy warriors on the left, can make life hell for the Ivan's of this world or any follower of Christ.

The failings of human consciousness, deprived of its divine dimension, have been a determining factor in all the major crimes of this century . . . The only possible explanation for [these wars] is a mental eclipse among the leaders of

Europe due to their lost awareness of a Supreme Power above them. Only a godless embitterment could have moved ostensibly Christian states to employ poison gas, a weapon so obviously beyond the limits of humanity.

In a deterministic universe without a divine dimension, we are nothing more than a pack of hungry hyenas feeding off a dead zebra. Do hyenas reform their gourmet preferences toward rotten carrion? Moral evil involves a conscious decision by a moral agent to engage in such vile atrocities of employing poison gas to vaporise the innocence. But the Big Bang, on Naturalism, has determined everything and all actions would be mere echoes of such a cataclysmic event. However, the Big Bang, if created by God, gives us freedom of the will.

The same kind of defect, the flaw of a consciousness lacking all divine dimension, was manifested after World War II when the West yielded to the satanic temptation of the 'nuclear umbrella.' It was equivalent to saying: Let's cast off worries, let's free the younger generation from their duties and obligations, let's make no effort to defend ourselves, to say nothing of defending others – let's stop our ears to the groans emanating from the East, and let us live instead in the pursuit of happiness.

Satanic temptation is real. To say such supernatural evil doesn't exist is to say that millions of humans being vaporised by a nuclear bomb is nothing more than the rearrangement of atoms. Shielding our ears from the groans emanating from Western or Eastern holocausts in the pursuit of happiness is evil and satanic.

Isn't it strange that since many young people have forgotten God, cast off their worries and freed themselves from their duties and obligations, the moral decay and decadence of the West and beyond continue to intensify? And from the strange to the bizarre that people recently wept for joy and partied into the night when abortion was made legal in two former religious countries?

As for the pursuit of happiness: serial killers, psychopaths and ruthless corporate sociopaths follow this mantra with gusto to the detriment of the victims they swat-out and stamp on along the way in order to obtain relativistic, moral bliss. But you won't find such evil on their social media profiles, where 'human rights', 'child protection', 'equality' and 'tolerance' are amongst their many virtue-signalling causes. It's got to the stage that they're stoned on virtue and don't understand Truth or the concept of God. What would Solzhenitsyn think of today's world, more than three decades after his speech?

Today's [1983] world has reached a stage which, if it had been described to preceding centuries, would have called forth the cry: 'This is the Apocalypse!' Yet we have grown used to this kind of world; we even feel at home in it. Dostoevsky warned that 'great events could come upon us and catch us intellectually unprepared.' This is precisely what has happened. And he predicted that 'the world will be saved only after it has been possessed by the demon of evil.'

The Bible also predicted this moral chaos. The above quote was written long before animal brothels for zoophiles ('erotic zoos') were introduced in some Western countries; before

aborted babies' body parts were being sold in the West, and before an Italian surgeon prepares for the world's first human head transplant on a man. And you thought the Island of Doctor Moreau was macabre and morally sick?

Whether it really will be saved we shall have to wait and see: this will depend on our conscience, on our spiritual lucidity, on our individual and combined efforts in the face of catastrophic circumstances. But it has already come to pass that the demon of evil, like a whirlwind, triumphantly circles all five continents of the earth.

In the Bible (John 12:31) it says: "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out." In a fallen world ruled by satan, Solzhenitsyn was all too familiar with the evil people do when rejecting Christ. That is not to say all atheists are bad. Many atheists are morally good people but it's difficult for them to justify their morality objectively.

As for the Christian, the Romanian writer Richard Wurmbrand (1909-2001), who was tortured for his faith in a Communist prison, wrote about the cruelty of atheism "which is hard to believe when man has no faith in the reward of faith in the reward of good or the punishment of evil".

Wurmbrand said, on this worldview, there is no reason to be human, as there is no restraint from the depths of evil which is in man. He wrote: "The Communist torturers often said, 'There is no God. There is no hereafter. No punishment for evil. We can do what we wish!' I have even heard one torturer

say, 'I thank God in whom I don't believe that I have lived to this hour when I can express all of the evil in my heart.' He expressed it in unbelievable brutality and torture inflicted on prisoners."

Solzhenitsyn continues:

By the time of the Revolution, faith had virtually disappeared in Russian educated circles; and amongst the uneducated, its health was threatened. In its past, Russia did know a time when the social ideal was not fame, or riches, or material success, but a pious way of life. Russia was then steeped in an Orthodox Christianity which remained true to the Church of the first centuries.

Then in the 19th century, the path to Marxism was opened. By the time of the Revolution, faith had virtually disappeared in Russian educated circles; and amongst the uneducated, its health was threatened, according to Solzhenitsyn.

Within the philosophical system of Marx and Lenin, and at the heart of their psychology, hatred of God is the principal driving force, more fundamental than all their political and economic pretensions.

It was the great Existentialist Russian writer, Dostoevsky, who drew from the French Revolution and its hatred of the Church: the lesson that "revolution must necessarily begin with atheism".

Solzhenitsyn again:

But the world had never before known a godlessness as organized, militarized, and tenaciously malevolent as that practiced by Marxism. Within the philosophical system of Marx and Lenin, and at the heart of their psychology, hatred of God is the principal driving force, more fundamental than all their political and economic pretensions. Militant atheism is not merely incidental or marginal to Communist policy; it is not a side effect, but the central pivot.

What followed was the stuff of nightmares. Thousands of churches were destroyed; tens of thousands of clergy were tortured, shot, sent to labour camps, dumped onto the streets, penniless, and exiled to the desolate regions of the freezing north. Solzhenitsyn said all of these Christian martyrs went unswervingly to their deaths for the faith; "instances of apostasy were few and far between. For tens of millions of laymen, access to the Church was blocked, and they were forbidden to bring up their children in the Faith". Religious parents had their children taken away from them and they were thrown into prison. And to think many leftists today wear T-shirts with the hammer-and-sickle image emblazoned on them.

But there is something they did not expect: that in a land where churches have been levelled, where a triumphant atheism has rampaged uncontrolled for two-thirds of a century, where the clergy is utterly humiliated and deprived of all independence, where what remains of the Church as an institution is tolerated only for the sake of



propaganda directed at the West, where even today people are sent to the labour camps for their faith . . . As is always the case in times of persecution and suffering, the awareness of God in my country has attained great acuteness and profundity.

In the decadent West, where political persecution was *relatively* non-existent during the time of Solzhenitsyn's lecture, the great dissident quickly became a non-person. The liberal 'Intelligentsia' in the popular media "don't do God", thus it was a great disappointment to see such a maverick proudly wear his Christianity on his sleeve. This was, and still is, the worst secular sin.

Over 30 years later, the same thing is happening to the Christian Russian leader Vladimir Putin. He said many Euro-Atlantic countries have moved away from their roots, including Christian values and that this is the path to degradation.

Some will point to Putin's KGB past as an example of him possibly lying, but many people's views, including Putin's, can change over the years. An example is the former KGB officer Yuri Bezmenov, who was a member of the elite propaganda arm of the Committee. But after becoming disillusioned with the evil system, he risked his life by escaping to the West. Like Solzhenitsyn, he spoke about the evils of Communism.

He said: "It takes from 15 to 20 years to demoralize a nation. Why that many years? Because this is the minimum number of years required to educate one generation of students in the

country of your enemy exposed to the ideology of [their] enemy. In other words, Marxism-Leninism ideology is being pumped into the soft heads of at least three generations of American students without being challenged or counterbalanced by the basic values of Americanism; American patriotism.”

Like George Orwell, who also wrote about the evil of Communism in his most famous book, Bezmenov coincidentally said these above words in an interview in 1984. As for Putin (who remains an enigma): he recently inaugurated an enormous statue of St. Vladimir, the patron saint of the Russian Orthodox Church, about 100 yards from the Kremlin walls.

Iben Thranholm, one of Denmark’s most widely read columnists, says this of the statue: “If you stand at a certain point across the street from the Kremlin, the cross that he bears is even taller than the star in the Red Square, so the symbolism is very potent. In the West... we are going the other way. We can’t discard our values and heritage fast enough.”

Is it true that post-Soviet Russia has now morally and spiritually traded places with the West, especially the USA? The writer and magazine editor, Taki Theodoracopoulos, says: “Russians are a spiritual people who yearn to connect with Christ, not Wall Street.”

In a series of lectures, he gave at Wheaton College in Chicago in 1968, the theologian Francis Shaeffer said: “We live in a post-Christian world . . . There is no exhibition of this anywhere in history so clearly in such a short expanse of years as in our own generation... Having turned away from the

knowledge given by God, man has now lost the whole Christian culture.”

And to think he said this 50 years ago. What would he think now, had he lived to see today? A day when an abortion clinic official, having lunch, jokes about buying a Lamborghini if she gets the best price for some aborted baby’s tissue and body parts.

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