

# Correspondence

## Solzhenitsyn

To the Editors: William C. Fletcher's "The Dissent of Solzhenitsyn" (August, 1972) does indeed present, as he claims, the prospect of a breathtaking change in the Soviet Union. There is no doubt that the merger of religious and secular dissent would present a new and formidable challenge to the Party's present control. At the same time, however, one misses in Fletcher's analysis any serious consideration of what comes after "liberalization." The same criticism, not so incidentally, must be raised with respect to Abraham Rothberg's "Writers Under the Heirs of Stalin" in your February issue. Each of these authors deplures, as any decent man must, the continuing repression of dissent; both seem guilty of viewing dissent as a political end in itself. To be sure, those of us who may long ago have viewed the Soviet Union as a promising experiment in socialism have many reasons for disillusionment. Yet the present Soviet leadership has no choice but to try to envision a future that does not simply repudiate the past. Fletcher's apparently uncritical affirmation of religious dissent, on the other hand, seems to invite nothing more than such a repudiation.

Does he really mean to suggest that the unreconstructed theology (or nontheology, as some would insist) of Russian Orthodoxy and its inherent attachment to the inequalities of the past can be the basis of a new alliance for the Soviet experiment? It is fine for Solzhenitsyn to be nostalgic about "the pure flame of the Christian faith" kept alive by the peasantry and to urge "love for the church," but has that faith or that church learned anything from the circumstances that led to its present cruel repression? For that matter, have the "secular dissidents" proposed any program for positive social change other than that they ought not to be silenced? It seems more than

possible that the alliance between secular intellectuals and the church's faithful will simply result in making the former appear as a thoroughly reactionary force, thus inviting further repression from the authorities, who, after all, cannot disown their socialist aspirations, no matter how much their previous actions have been a travesty of those aspirations.

Joel Nickelsburg  
Chicago, Illinois

William C. Fletcher Responds:

Mr. Nickelsburg raises some ideas which, inexplicably, should have been raised some years ago but were not. My substantial reactions may be confined to two points, one minor, the other major. The lesser point is the inference I draw that one should not "simply repudiate the past." Historically, the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of the Soviet Union did attempt to do precisely that in 1917, and therefore the suggestion that the present leadership must envision a future that somehow incorporates the past (whether pre-1917 or pre-1953) is not self-evident. My own opinion is shared by a number of contemporary Soviet writers with regard to Stalinism, and German citizens with regard to National Socialism.

It is Mr. Nickelsburg's plea for "serious consideration of what comes after" which raises an issue that causes me more discomfort. I should note that my own crystal ball is no less clouded than that of those early Bolsheviks who, upon discovering that the Revolution was not imminent in Germany, confidently prognosticated that Islam would carry the banner of the Communist eschaton.

I think Mr. Nickelsburg is mistaken—and perhaps dangerously so—in his inference that the church "can be the basis of a new alliance for the Soviet experiment." I detect a certain inclination toward a totalitarian view of the body politik in this approach. Mr. Nickelsburg is quite correct in excoriating a vision of the future based on the secular rule of the Orthodox Church. I was absolutely appalled by the platform of the "Union

for the Liberation of the Russian People" in Leningrad in 1968 which posited just such a theocracy. I confess to being an admirer of John Calvin, but his experiment in theocratic rule still leaves the faintest scent of brimstone, the faded footprint of the cloven hoof, in Geneva.

I do not advocate an alliance of dissenters *couping* the *état* in the USSR. This would amount to a substitution of totalitarianism no less awful than that of Castro for Batista, or that of the *πενταγων* for King Konstantin. What I do advocate is not a transfer of totalitarianisms but a replacement of totalitarianism by pluralism. I would envision (in my fond and un-*Realpolitik* dreams) a society in which one is free to think what he likes rather than having the juggernaut of conformity imposed on him by force. A man, I think, should be free to dream dreams other than those of Socialist Realism, of a mystical sort, of a theological sort, or of any other sort up to and including phrenology and a Flat Earth. This is what I mean by a pluralistic society. In this view (*pace* Nickelsburg), I do plead "guilty of viewing dissent as a political end in itself."

## India's "Power Politics" Defended

To the Editors: I must compliment the editors for printing three interesting essays (August *Worldview*) on the theory and practice of India's social and political norms and the effect of Bangladesh upon modern international relations. My comments relate to two points, and the purpose is to suggest that one *ought not* to regard India's action in Bangladesh as a radical departure from the theory and practice of Indian non-alignment. The difference is one of degree rather than kind, and it relates to the manner of execution of a strategic plan rather than in the idea. Let me elaborate this.

*First:* Professor Gunnar Myrdal is quoted on page 35 as saying that "renunciation of power politics" is

(continued on p. 62)

this "Essay in Social Theory and Theological Reconstruction" seems largely aimed at urban planners and other experts who might find the theological-historical excursions excessively offputting. What's more, this is more a systematic argument than an essay; describing it as an essay is perhaps an excuse for sometimes not following through on suggestive allusions that cry out for careful elaboration. But now to the more important points: Professor Stackhouse has given us a statement, both courageous and convincing, that effectively counters the themes of urban weariness and return-to-nature that afflict current intellectual discourse. He of-

fers a carefully nuanced argument establishing the linkage between the city and Judeo-Christian religion and, indeed, between both of them and Western civilization. In a way that goes beyond the now conventional polemic against the vaunted "objectivity" of the sciences, he exposes the historical, metaphysical and even theological assumptions that, for the most part unconsciously, undergird contemporary social theory. (The chapter on "Social Theory as Secular Theology" is recommended to social scientists of all varieties.) Professional ethicists might well argue with Stackhouse's use of "the fit" as an ethical category (what is

good, what is right, what is fit). It is well worth an argument. Stackhouse joins neither in celebrating Harvey Cox's secular city nor in bemoaning Jacques Ellul's doomed Babylon, nor does he merely chart a safe middle way between extremes. He suggests, rather, an urban model for the anticipation of history's fulfillment, and for all of us who may be far from that fulfillment he offers illuminating guidelines for ethical decision along the way. The reader may not buy the answers offered in *Ethics* but he can hardly help being provoked to re-examine the answers with which, knowingly or not, he is now operating.

## Correspondence

[from p. 2]

the "deeper meaning of nonalignment." On page 41 Mr. Ranly says that India refused to enter the game of balance of power. These views are only partially correct because all that Jawaharlal Nehru did was to say that the evils of power politics ought to be removed; that European power rivalries should not be extended into Asia; and that India wanted to proceed without joining military alliances. But rarely did Nehru forget in practice that nonalignment was also a form of power politics—albeit a nonmilitary form which was necessary for a weaker member of the world community until such time as it could become strong and be able to "call the shots." The point, therefore, is that India entered the game of power politics in the 1950's, but the entry was not perfect and as such was counterproductive, as, for instance, in 1962. In other words, nonalignment is an important facet of power politics; it is not independent of it or a substitute for it.

Other meanings can be seen in the relationship between nonalignment and power politics, as, for instance, in Nehru's concern to pursue a defense policy through friendship with the USA and China and in his effort to achieve a balance in inter-

national alignments by democratizing international political processes. This is the essential message of Indian negotiators in trade and disarmament affairs, and the message has been consistent from the 1950's to the present. As such it is more appropriate to argue that Nehru was essentially against Big Power politics, and the assumption was that the great powers were the sources of global tension and as such it was essential to rectify the sources of tension rather than the symptoms. A study of actual Indian behavior, in and outside South Asia, will reveal that even though the rhetoric was against power politics, and this camouflaged India's central interests, the actual behavior was an adaptation from the balance-of-power approach to foreign policy.

*Second:* On page 37 Mr. Schall says that the argument between "three-quarters of the world's governments and Mrs. Indira Gandhi was not about the politics of east Bengal, but about the relationship between politics and force." This description needs to be refined: It is true that the question was not merely one of what happened in Bangladesh but also about the kind of precedents which were being created. But even though the focus was on the relationship between politics and force, the difference between

the Indian and the American governments concerned the implied rules in the relationship. The precedents of Soviet involvement in Czechoslovakia and American involvement in North Vietnam eroded the inhibition against the use of force, and this seemed to be the effect also in Indian foreign policy. Against this, one issue which Messrs. Nixon, Kissinger and Rogers invoked was that "every great power must follow the principle that it should not encourage directly or indirectly any other nation to use force or armed aggression against one of its neighbors" (Nixon's remarks at the State Department, April 10, 1972, USIS text, pp. 1-2). In the context of U.S. views that the USSR should restrain India in security matters, Indians were quick to notice that such logic applied to India's military action vis-à-vis Pakistan but did not seem to apply to the worldwide involvements of the great powers. As such it seemed that the argument was not only about the relationship between politics and force but whether there were going to be at least two sets of rules on this point, one of which applied to the nuclear superpowers and the other which applied to lesser powers.

Ashok Kapur

University of Waterloo  
Ontario, Canada