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# Reflections on Communism Twenty Years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall

by Paul Hollander

## *Executive Summary*

Twenty years ago the Berlin Wall fell, marking the collapse of Soviet communism. The failure of the communist system was not merely economic and political; it was a moral failure as well. Over time communism created a deep disillusionment and revulsion among those who lived under it. The diminished sense of legitimacy of the ruling elite in the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc countries contributed to the unraveling of those systems as well.

At the same time, there is a remarkable lack of moral concern in the West with the atrocities committed under communist systems, including the tens of millions of people who perished as a result of communist policies. By contrast there has been a great deal of impassioned condemnation of the outrages of Nazism. The most important reason for treating Nazism and communism differently has been the perception that communist crimes were unintended

consequences of the pursuit of lofty goals whereas the goals of Nazism themselves were unmitigated evil.

Western intellectuals who had once idealized the Soviet Union have done little soul searching regarding the roots of their beliefs. The long association of idealism with animosity toward commerce and capitalism among Western intellectuals has contributed to a reluctance to criticize a system ostensibly established in opposition to the values they abhorred.

Public attitudes in former communist countries have been conflicted because of the arguable complicity of many citizens in keeping the old system in power. A predominant attitude in Eastern Europe and Russia toward the former communist systems has been a mixture of oblivion, denial, and repression.

Contemporary Western attitudes toward the fall of the Soviet system suggest that political beliefs endure when they are widely shared and can satisfy important emotional needs.

*Paul Hollander is professor emeritus of sociology at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and an associate at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies of Harvard University. Born in Hungary, he escaped following the crushing of the 1956 Revolution by Soviet forces.*

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## Introduction

The 20th anniversary of the collapse of Soviet communism in Eastern Europe is an appropriate time for stocktaking and for seeking to answer a number of questions associated with this historic event, its aftermath, and its continued influence.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I will address the following questions:

- Why did Soviet communism collapse, and what were some of the consequences of its collapse?
- What have been the attitudinal responses to the collapse in the former and surviving communist countries?
- How did the Western publics and elites respond to the collapse, and how did earlier conceptions of communism and attitudes towards communist systems and ideologies influence those responses?
- Why do the ideals associated with communist systems and movements remain attractive in many parts of the world and among many groups and individuals despite the well-documented crimes of communism and its enormous cost in terms of human lives?

Two questions need to be dealt with at the outset. Did communism as a whole collapse or just Soviet communism—the latter referring to the Soviet Union and countries under its direct control in Eastern Europe (the so-called Soviet bloc that was also designated by Soviet authorities as the Socialist Commonwealth)? Or did communism collapse as a global phenomenon, including communist ideology in all its varieties? Answering those questions requires clarification of what is meant by “communist.”

Communist states referred to themselves not as “communist,” but rather “socialist.” “Communism” was the long-term objective to be attained in the distant, unspecified future, at the pinnacle of historical evolution. Communist society, as envisioned by Marx, was going to be characterized by unprecedented material

abundance, the “withering away” of the state (that is to say, the state as an agent of coercion), and the disappearance of all inequalities and social problems (or social pathologies) such as crime, alcoholism, and family disintegration. Most importantly, exploitation and alienation were going to be eliminated.<sup>2</sup> Under these conditions, the conflict between individual and society, or private and public interests, was also supposed to disappear.

As commonly used in the West, “communist” refers to the political system of countries that designated themselves as “socialist.” However those “socialist” states should not be confused with social-democratic countries such as those in Scandinavia. The countries discussed in this paper were dominated by parties that usually (but not invariably) called themselves “communist.” Notwithstanding differences in size, population, history, culture, levels of industrialization, and urbanization, they had in common the following attributes:

- The doctrine of Marxism-Leninism (usually interpreted by the supreme leader) as the source of legitimacy and supposed guide to all of the regime’s policies.
- A one-party system often led by a deified supreme leader; these parties claimed virtual infallibility and universal support (as expressed in the alleged 99 percent of the votes they regularly received in elections that offered no other choice).
- The monopolistic control of the economy and media of mass communications.
- A large, highly differentiated and specialized police force that was dedicated to combating “political crimes” and was instrumental in keeping the party in power.
- An ostensible commitment to develop a new, superior human being.

Some of those states were also totalitarian—at least during certain periods, such as the Soviet Union under Stalin, China under Mao Tse-tung, Cambodia under Pol Pot, and Cuba under Fidel Castro. Totalitarian states unlike other repressive, authoritarian systems, developed unusually efficient and ambitious meth-

ods of social control and intimidation and sought to politicize most spheres of life. In the totalitarian society, the party/state reserved the right to interfere in aspects of life that used to be matters of indifference for other authoritarian rulers (i.e., the family, sexual morality, recreation, sports, travel, etc.). These totalitarian systems controlled both the means of production and mass communication. Totalitarian societies were also defined by their far-reaching goals of social, economic, and cultural transformation and by their attempted transformation of human nature that was to culminate in the rise of the new socialist or communist man.<sup>3</sup>

It remains debatable whether or not the collapse here discussed should be considered that of Soviet communism or more generally of communism—including its ideological underpinnings. It is indisputable, however, that in 1991 the Soviet Union fell apart. It is also indisputable that between 1989 and 1991, communist systems in Eastern Europe imploded. Those Eastern European regimes collapsed when it became clear that the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev would not keep them in power by Soviet military force as it had done in 1953 in East Germany, in 1956 in Hungary, and in 1968 in Czechoslovakia.

The collapse of Soviet communism also helped to hasten the end of the communist systems in Ethiopia and Nicaragua and weakened communist movements in other parts of the world. It has also stimulated the change of economic policies in some of the surviving communist states, especially China and Vietnam. Economic policies in Cuba and North Korea, however, remain largely unchanged.

## **Why Did Soviet Communism Collapse, and with What Consequences?**

It is important to note that the collapse, and especially its timing, was largely unforeseen both inside the communist countries and in the Western world.<sup>4</sup> This lack of anticipation was related to the prevailing percep-

tions and misperceptions of communist systems in general and the Soviet Union in particular.<sup>5</sup>

There was no single, universal cause of the end of communism in each of the Iron Curtain countries, but the weakening and disintegration of the Soviet Union was a major contributor to the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. Insofar as the popular rejection of those systems was among the causes of their collapse, a major component of that rejection was nationalistic resentment over Soviet political and cultural domination. Popular disenchantment with communist systems was far greater in Eastern Europe (where communist institutions and policies were externally imposed) than in the Soviet Union itself, where a resigned acceptance of communism by the populace was more typical.

The collapse was unanticipated largely because the Soviet Union succeeded over long periods of time to project an image of strength and staying power.<sup>6</sup> Some Western observers attributed this apparent stability to the agencies of control and coercion, others to the capacity of the communist system to meet the basic needs of the population. For example, Alexander Dallin of Stanford University wrote, "What we are really puzzling over is how a thoroughly controlled, tightly disciplined and heavily indoctrinated system as the Soviet Union managed to fall apart, unravel so easily and completely."<sup>7</sup>

Critics of communist systems tended to believe that an unpopular, inefficient, and repressive system could survive indefinitely given the determination of the rulers to stay in power, and given the means at their disposal to stifle dissent, crush opposition, keep levels of intimidation at a constant and high level, and hold popular expectations low. Some of the critics also believed that those systems succeeded in indoctrinating the population—at least to the extent that the population was no longer capable of entertaining alternatives to the existing and seemingly deeply entrenched system, and was thus reduced to passivity.<sup>8</sup>

Those in the West who were sympathetic in some measure to the Soviet system did not

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think that it would collapse either. Communist sympathizers considered communist regimes stable not because of their power of coercion, but because, in their opinion, communist countries were modernizing states that met, by and large, the needs of their populations and therefore enjoyed widespread popular legitimacy. In particular, Stephen F. Cohen of New York University believed that there was much evidence (including opinion surveys) that showed that even during the years of glasnost and perestroika “large majorities of Soviet citizens . . . continued to oppose free-market capitalism and to support fundamental economic-social features of the Soviet system—among them, public ownership of large-scale economic assets, a state-regulated market, guaranteed employment, controlled consumer prices . . . and free education and health care.” But he has also written that “a majority of Russians . . . regretted the end of the Soviet Union not because they pined for ‘Communism’ but because they lost a familiar state and secure way of life.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Some Explanations of the Unraveling**

Numerous explanations have been proposed in retrospect to account for the unraveling of the Soviet Union. The most popular one has been economic stagnation combined with Gorbachev’s policy of allowing more free expression, or glasnost. As the argument goes, the Soviet system faced serious, chronic economic problems throughout its existence, ranging from the famines of the late 1920s and early 1930s to the persistent shortages of consumer goods and housing. Those difficulties, however, did not endanger the survival of the system until, beginning in the mid 1980s, increased free expression made them subject to public discussion and the discontent they generated became more openly shared. Glasnost was probably the single most important contributor to the collapse. It made it possible for ordinary people to learn what was wrong with the system and to compare their own personal dissatisfaction with that of others—making everyone realize that their grievances were far from isolated.

The new permissiveness that glasnost ushered in came about because of the declining ideological convictions of the ruling elite and its diminished sense of legitimacy and political will, including the will to repress dissent and any criticism of the authorities. At the same time, Gorbachev and his associates believed that greater openness in confronting the defects of the system would reinvigorate rather than discredit it. Most consequentially, glasnost made it possible for the general public to observe and ponder the abyss between the theory and practice of communism, between official ideals and daily realities, between the promises of the authorities and the multiple failures regarding their fulfillment.

Glasnost delegitimized the Soviet system by allowing the population to learn about the many defects and crimes of Soviet communism, including forced collectivization, famines, the millions who perished under Stalin, the show trials, the specifics of life in the Gulag, the mismanagement of the economy, the decline of public health, the grotesque cult of Stalin, and the privileges of the Soviet political elites, the “nomenklatura.”<sup>10</sup> Glasnost also enabled the Soviet public to learn more about life in the West, thereby intensifying relative deprivation—that is to say, the sense of deprivation based not only on objective realities (such as the shortages of housing and consumer goods) but also on comparison between their lives and those of westerners.

But what accounts for the rise of glasnost? It may best be explained by the mindset of Gorbachev and his colleagues who were far less rigid and doctrinaire than their predecessors; their ideological certainties had been shaken and weakened. As a result they did not exercise power as ruthlessly as would have been required to fend off challenges to their rule. The rise of Gorbachev reflected generational change. He and his associates no longer possessed the self-assurance and the political will that allowed former Soviet leaders to preside—untroubled—over a wasteful and inefficient economy, to enjoy politically determined privileges without compunction, and to crush

dissent with a clear conscience. This was the major proposition of my 1999 book, *Political Will and Personal Belief*.

The roots of the doubts shared by this new generation of Soviet leaders probably reach back to the historic speech of Nikita Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. In that speech, Khrushchev revealed many details about Stalin's reign of terror and the intolerant, cruel personality that was in striking contrast to Stalin's official depiction. Those shocking and unexpected revelations became the basis of the gradual delegitimization and questioning of the whole Soviet system among the members of the party elite, which included, prominently, Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, as well as politburo members Alexander Yakovlev and Eduard Shevardnadze, and historian Dmitri Volkogonov.

The more proximate causes of the collapse may be summarized as follows:

- The massive inefficiency that was always an intrinsic part of the system of central planning. The failure of communism to meet the material needs of the populace became more obvious over time. Shortages of even the most basic foodstuffs and consumer goods were chronic and ubiquitous throughout the communist bloc, especially the Soviet Union.
- The costly Soviet intervention and defeat in Afghanistan (1979–1988), which drained the economy and illustrated the limits of Soviet imperial power.
- The arms race that intensified under U.S. president Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, which imposed another great burden on the economy and further undermined the standard of living, increasing popular discontent.
- The intensifying unrest and uprisings in Eastern Europe. Although repeatedly suppressed, the uprisings made it clear that the alleged beneficiaries of the Soviet rule did not appreciate the imposition of the Soviet model. Thus the deteriorating situation in Eastern Europe contributed to

the questioning of communism in the Soviet Union itself.

Discontent was nothing new over the decades of Soviet control. What was new was the greatly diminished public willingness to tolerate the failures of the system and the greater freedom to express discontent and frustration. There was discontent with the low standard of living, the stifling bureaucratization of life, the privileges and corruption of the nomenklatura, the waste of resources on foreign interventions and allies, and the limitations of personal freedom (foreign travel in particular). There was also smoldering ethnic discontent in many parts of the Soviet Union that was contained as long as the central authorities exercised power without hesitation.

### **The Divergence between Theory and Practice**

Richard Pipes of Harvard University has argued that in addition to these proximate causes, the fundamental cause of the collapse “was the utopian nature of its [the regime’s] objectives.” That is to say, the Soviet system from its earliest days pursued goals that were both unrealizable and unpopular, including the attempted creation of “the new socialist man.”<sup>11</sup> Those utopian efforts demanded a waste of resources, vast amounts of coercion and fraudulent political propaganda. Martin Malia of the University of California at Berkeley made a similar point: “Of all the reasons for the collapse of communism, the most basic is that it was an intrinsically nonviable, indeed impossible project from the beginning. However important in its genesis were the heritage of Russian backwardness and authoritarianism, or the personal ruthlessness of Lenin and Stalin, it is Marxism that was the decisive factor . . . making communism the historically unique phenomenon it was. And the perverse genius of Marxism is to present an unattainable utopia as an infallibly scientific enterprise.”<sup>12</sup>

These Western assessments of the nature of communism—utopian or otherwise—have great

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bearing on the disputes and explanations regarding the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus, one set of the responses to the collapse was shaped by the belief that it occurred because, as Malia and Pipes argued, the system sought to achieve utopian goals inspired by Marxism. In other words, the collapse occurred because theory and practice converged (i.e., Marxist theory compelled communist systems to pursue unattainable utopian goals). The theoretical foundation or blueprint itself was flawed, not viable, as Malia put it. Milovan Djilas, the Yugoslav communist politician who later became a critic of communist totalitarianism, also believed that “the [communist] idea itself contained the seeds of its own inglorious, future collapse. . . . Such visions may encourage us to sacrifice . . . but they are also opiates to the soul. . . . The idea dried up in proportion as the reality legitimized by it grew stronger.”<sup>13</sup>

Igor Kon, a Russian social scientist, emphasized the psychological dimensions of the popular dissatisfaction. He wrote: “Among the causes contributing to the demise of the Soviet empire one has to count the psychological crisis that gripped Soviet society in the early 1970s and wore it down through the 1980s. Apathy, cynicism and alcoholism had as much to do with the collapse . . . as falling prices on world oil markets and corruption among Soviet officials. . . . Perestroika failed to deliver on its promise . . . because its architect . . . underestimated the depth of the anger that enveloped Soviet society after its cherished myths were exposed.”<sup>14</sup>

By contrast, many (mostly Western) commentators argued that the system had little or nothing to do with Marxism, and it collapsed because theory and practice diverged as the ruling elite made no serious attempt to realize the humane and liberating ideals of Marxism. These two seemingly conflicting approaches may in part be reconciled by proposing that there was a fundamental discrepancy between the promises and ideals embedded in the Marxist theory and the results of their attempted realization, but not between the theory and the policies these ideals inspired and legitimated.

The reasons leading to the collapse included both sets of factors: some of the ideals or theoretical propositions of Marxism were clearly adopted and zealously pursued but they had adverse, unintended consequences. For example the collectivization of agriculture retarded food production, and state controlled industrialization created a huge, inefficient bureaucracy, diminished incentives of the workers, and contributed greatly to the concentration of political power.

Marx and Lenin (initially) believed that communist ideals would command broad popular support and therefore little violence or coercion will be required to implement them. They also believed that all forms of human misbehavior will “wither away” after the proletarian revolution and the seizure of the means of production. As Leszek Kolakowski put it, “Marx seems to have imagined that once capitalists were done away with the whole world could become a kind of Athenian agora: one had only to forbid private ownership of machines or land and, as if by magic, human beings would cease to be selfish and their interests would coincide in perfect harmony.”<sup>15</sup>

There were further connections between Marxist theory and Soviet-communist practice. Communist leaders shared Marx’s conviction that capitalism and the profit motive were the sources of all evil. They also believed that religion was a primitive and debilitating superstition and a tool of the ruling classes that had to be suppressed. Marx and the leaders of actually existing communist systems also shared a contempt for peasants and their traditions. Marx’s doctrine of class struggle too was eagerly embraced by communist leaders and helped to legitimize their ruthlessness and intolerance for any opposition or dissent. Neither Marx nor 20th-century communist leaders were concerned with the dangers of bureaucratization and the concentration of political power.

The all-too-visible gaps between theory and practice (or theory and its attempted realization) were crucial in delegitimizing the system and in creating massive, entrenched popular discontent. As Alexander Wat, a Polish

writer, noted, “The loss of freedom, tyranny, abuse, hunger would all have been easier to bear if not for the compulsion to call them freedom, justice, the good of the people.”<sup>16</sup> Or, as Hungarian writers Thomas Aczel and Tibor Meray put it, “Most intolerable was the simulation of virtue, the endless proclamation of good intentions: everything was taking place on behalf of ‘the people.’ . . . The writers knew very well that there were great social contradictions in Western capitalist systems. . . . But in those capitalist societies at least they did not insist that everything belonged to the masses.”<sup>17</sup>

The ubiquitous political propaganda made a substantial contribution to popular discontent and cynicism since its repetitious assertions sharply and spectacularly contrasted with the daily experience of the people.<sup>18</sup>

The disunity between theory and practice was more apparent. The public ownership of the means of production did not make the economy more productive. The workers deprived of autonomous trade unions had less control over their wages and working conditions than their counterparts under capitalism; they were often searched when exiting the factories (to make sure they did not steal) and had little reason to consider themselves masters of their fate and owners of the means of production. One-party rule was no more democratic than parliamentary democracy. The Communist Party was not composed of the most selfless and idealistic representatives of the working classes; the leaders of the party and government proved quite vulnerable to corruption. Communist prisons were no more humane than those in capitalist countries and they too failed to rehabilitate the inmates. The privileges of the nomenklatura contradicted the ideals of social equality. The masses did not readily accept that religion was their opiate and that the persecution of believers was just and served a useful purpose. In short, the causes of the collapse of Soviet communism could be found both in its ideological roots and theoretical inspiration as well as in the unintended consequences of the practices and policies of the system.

Unlike most Western commentators, Stephen Cohen believed that the Soviet system was eminently reformable and that its collapse had far less to do with structural factors than with the mistaken decisions and policies of particular leaders such as Gorbachev and Yeltsin. It is those personal decisions that provide, in Cohen’s view “the essential explanation of the end of the Soviet Union.” According to him, “the opposing but symbiotic will of two extraordinary figures [Gorbachev and Yeltsin] . . . led to the end of the Soviet Union.” The decisions and policies that proved to be fatal to the Soviet state included Gorbachev’s “giving away immense personal power he had inherited” as well as political decisions that “dismantled and undermined the old Soviet economic system without leaving time for another to develop in its place.” Glasnost, in addition to its consequences noted earlier “contributed to the economic crisis by loosening central controls. . . . By 1990, Gorbachev’s reforms and other developments had removed or weakened the elements of Party-state command and control that had defined the Soviet economy and made it workable . . . for decades.” The “fateful” decisions of these two leaders included Yeltsin’s hasty, arbitrary, and ill-conceived decision, as Cohen sees it, to dismantle the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics. Cohen also believes that the economic shortages by themselves were not serious—the problem was “primarily one of distribution.”<sup>19</sup>

While Cohen never had illusions about the repressive qualities of the Soviet system prior to the rise of Gorbachev, he has entertained for much of his professional life questionable hopes about its humane and liberating potential rooted in the original ideological inspiration personified by Nikolai Bukharin, who was executed during Stalin’s purges.

In concluding this brief survey of the causes of the collapse of communism, it is important to stress once more that Soviet communism was not merely or primarily an economic and political failure—it was a moral one as well.<sup>20</sup> The system’s legitimacy greatly diminished (or completely disappeared) not only

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because it malfunctioned economically and administratively, but because of its notorious mendacity, which created, over time, a widespread moral indignation and cynicism among the population. Doubtless, the ideological convictions and sense of legitimacy of this new generation of leaders was also undermined by economic stagnation, but that stagnation was not the only, or major source of doubt. For all the above reasons, the Soviet leaders were less capable than their predecessors of subordinating means to ends and keeping the communist system going.

**Some Consequences of the Fall of Communism**

One of the initial consequences of the Soviet Union's disintegration was the growth or perpetuation of economic, social, and demographic problems. Prominent among them were crime (especially organized crime) and ethnic conflict. There has also been a decline in the standard of living, public health, and population growth, and a rise in new and very visible inequalities. The independence of the former Soviet republics created new relationships between Russia and the politically independent but economically still dependent successor states. Their economic dependence on Russia would be later used by President Vladimir Putin to reassert at least a measure of control over those former Soviet territories.

The integration of some of the former Soviet bloc countries into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union was another significant outcome of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the "Socialist Commonwealth." That contributed to a measure of political stability and progress in those countries but also resulted in massive resentment and apprehension in Russia. The reunification of Germany was another major outcome of the collapse.

By and large, the process of political, cultural, and economic westernization has been more rapid and consistent in Czechoslovakia and its successor states and in Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and in the Baltic countries. In the Ukraine, Belarus, Albania, Bulgaria,

Romania, and Russia, the process of westernization has been less successful.

In Eastern Europe, as in Russia, the new and weaker central authorities have had difficulty coping with resurgent social problems (crime, drugs, homelessness, caring for the old, ethnic tensions, etc.). The rise of new inequalities produced resentment and dissatisfaction in Eastern Europe, where the privileges of the nomenklatura used to be carefully hidden from public scrutiny.

Political polarization in Eastern Europe has been another consequence of the collapse. Democratization allowed for a free expression of formerly suppressed political sentiments and ideologies such as virulent nationalism, anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism and the revival of old ethnic hatreds peculiar to the region. In the former Czechoslovakia (split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia), Hungary, and Romania, popular hostility toward the gypsy population became freely expressed. In Hungary (which has the largest surviving Jewish population in Eastern Europe) anti-Semitism has become overt in many parts of the population and has even found expression in the mass media.

Globally, the most obvious consequence of the collapse was the rise of the United States as the only superpower<sup>21</sup> and the replacement of the Cold War by a series of localized conflicts of diverse origins. The rise of global terrorism perpetuated by radical Islamic groups also followed the collapse, though the rise of terrorism cannot be directly linked to the fall of the Soviet Union.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has encouraged the United States to play a more active, interventionist role in world affairs—as expressed by the Gulf War in 1991, the Iraq War beginning in 2003, and the removal from power of the Taliban in Afghanistan beginning in 2001. Those actions and policies also created new, unanticipated problems and contributed to a substantial increase of worldwide hostility toward the United States. The resurgent anti-Americanism and anti-capitalism diverted attention from the communist systems, both extinct and surviving. As a result efforts to bet-



ter understand the nature of communism and the damage it inflicted on the world have diminished. More recently, anti-Americanism and anti-capitalism have found expression in the rise to power of radical leftist political movements in Latin America, especially Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, as well in the electoral return to power of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

Generally speaking, the collapse of the Soviet empire did not stimulate in the West or other parts of the world a serious or lasting moral or philosophical reassessment of the nature of communism comparable to the massive moral reflections stimulated by Nazism and its well-known evils. Nor has there been much of what some critics of the United States called “triumphalism,” although there were a handful of overly optimistic assertions about the supposed “end of history” (i.e., an end of serious, ideologically based political conflict and of any serious questioning of liberal democracy).<sup>22</sup>

The fall of Soviet communism has been used by many academic intellectuals to reaffirm their critiques of the theories of totalitarianism, of the Cold War policies of the United States, and of the anti-communist disposition in general rather than to probe the nature of communism in the light of its collapse and the new information that has become available. The collapse also reinvigorated “revisionism” in Soviet studies. The latter denied the applicability of the totalitarian model to the Soviet Union, shifted responsibility for the Cold War to the United States, reduced the estimates of the victims of communism, and diminished the part that communist ideology and high-level decisionmakers played in mass murders.<sup>23</sup>

The worldwide recession that started in 2008 has further stimulated critiques of capitalism, which in turn helped to neutralize critical assessments of communist systems—extinct or surviving. There remains a discernible continuity (further discussed below) in Western countries and among Western intellectuals between longstanding (and largely discredited) views of communist systems and the responses to their collapse and aftermath.

## Responses and Attitudes toward the Collapse in Former and Surviving Communist States

The response to the collapse in the former Soviet bloc countries and the Soviet Union has been determined largely by the gap between the expectations raised by such momentous change and the fulfillment of those expectations. To be sure, the responses and attitudes have not been static or uniform in those areas. Generally speaking, with the passage of time, the enthusiasm occasioned by the collapse declined as new problems emerged. A large proportion of the population in those countries expected more rapid and spectacular improvements in their standard of living than occurred. At the same time, they did not expect their new, democratically elected governments to be tainted by corruption and petty infighting. The unseemly public expressions of competition for political power were unfamiliar and unwelcome. Similarly, they did not expect the increase of a wide range of social problems and the new forms of inequality.

There was also disenchantment among intellectuals who had been at the forefront of the movement for change. Andras Bozoki, a Hungarian political scientist, observed that many intellectuals who played a major part in the largely peaceful transformation of Central and Eastern European societies “found it increasingly difficult to find a place in the newly consolidating political systems.” While some willingly became politicians, the majority became disillusioned and were either pushed out or withdrew from political life. . . . The bureaucratic, routine politics . . . was unattractive to many intellectuals who had actively participated in the transition. Some felt that the emerging system was not what they had struggled to create, their dream of a victorious civil society giving way to party elites with partial interests.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, in many sectors of society, the initial euphoria over the collapse gave way to a mixture of bewilderment, ambivalence, and cyni-

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cism, as well as some nostalgia for the old days. This nostalgia has been far more pronounced among the old and less educated than the young, the highly skilled, and well educated. As James Millar and Sharon Wolchik of George Washington University have written, "The belief and desire for an extensive system of welfare entitlements . . . represents a significant legacy of Soviet-style communism."<sup>25</sup>

In Hungary, the relatively permissive "goulash communism" of the Kadar regime has been nostalgically recalled by those disturbed by the new inequalities and the diminished social stability of the post-communist era. Many Hungarians also reacted negatively to the new freedom of expression that allowed the venting of irredentist, neo-Nazi, and anti-Semitic sentiments, and the establishment of political movements embodying those extreme attitudes.

In Russia, where the superpower status and the associated nationalistic pride used to compensate large segments of the population for their modest material circumstances, the loss of imperial-power status was widely regretted. These Russians wanted "respect"—and the more so the more uncertain they were whether or not their actual accomplishments merited the respect they demanded. The growth of public indifference in post-communist Russia toward former dissident author Alexander Solzhenitsyn that followed his return from the West in 1994 was another indication of the lack of interest in the past and the sufferings and indignities associated with it. It was also an expression of the public indifference to the critiques of communism that he personified.

Democratization initiated by Yeltsin was halted and reversed under his successor, Vladimir Putin. The latter's popularity rested on rebuilding social order and stability, increasing economic growth, beginning to restore the political and military power of Russia, and thereby satisfying the nationalistic longings in parts of the population. The 2008 military intervention in Georgia was the most obvious attempt to reassert Russia's military and political power over those areas that were

formerly part of the Soviet Union. Suspension of oil and gas shipments to other former Soviet republics was another attempt to reassert Russia's influence over those areas.

The deterioration of political conditions in Russia has also been marked by the assassinations of numerous journalists and human rights activists who were critical of the authorities. Also significant and ominous was the partial restoration of Stalin's reputation. According to official statements, school texts, and new discussions of Soviet history, Stalin's alleged accomplishments overshadow his "excesses" and errors. The new official line on Stalin received support from two sources. The older generation associated him with the old glories of the Soviet Union and a seemingly less corrupt, more stable and less confused era in Russian history. The second source of support came from some younger people who knew little about Stalin, but who adopted him as a symbol of their opposition to the new social realities, which they found alien and unaccommodating. The recent proposal by Russian president Dmitri Medvedev to set up a commission to oversee and rectify the teaching and research of Soviet-Russian history is yet another indication of the official determination to burnish the historical record of Russia to suit the resurgent nationalistic beliefs and current government policies.

In Eastern Europe, and especially in the more developed and westernized countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, democratization after 1989 has been far more successful. East Germany united with West Germany and instantly acquired a well-established democratic institutional framework. In the former Yugoslavia, which was not a part of the Soviet Bloc, instability and violent ethnic conflict erupted as it had in parts of the former Soviet Union, where some of its former constituent republics or regions, such as Chechnya, sought independence or greater autonomy.

The predominant attitude in Eastern Europe as well as Russia toward the former communist systems has been a mixture of oblivion, denial, and repression. Few former

communist officials were held responsible for violations of human rights. As Martin Malia noted, “throughout the former communist world . . . virtually none of its responsible officials has been put on trial or punished.”<sup>26</sup> Only in the Baltic countries were some communist officials, such as former KGB agents, tried and convicted for their participation in political repression or human rights abuses.<sup>27</sup> There were halting attempts in Czechoslovakia to introduce what came to be called “lustration” (exclusion from political participation for a period of time of those involved in gross human rights violations under the communist system).

Markus Wolf, the head of the foreign intelligence service of Stasi, the East German political police, was tried and convicted. On appeal, Wolf was given a suspended sentence. A handful of border guards were also tried. Some were convicted and served reduced prison terms. None of these half-hearted attempts had much in common with the sweeping and thorough de-Nazification program that was introduced after World War II in what became the Federal Republic of Germany. The differences between the treatment of Nazi and communist officials are indicative of the longstanding reluctance to pass comparable moral judgments over Nazism and communism (a matter that will be further discussed below).

For all of the above reasons, rather than reassessing the past and seeking a better understanding of the nature and the damage inflicted by the communist systems, public attention in ex-communist countries came to focus on the new political conflicts and economic problems, as well as on the new opportunities for consumption, enrichment, and private pleasures.

Public attitudes about the past were also conflicted—especially in Russia and East Germany—because of the arguable complicity of a considerable number of citizens in keeping the old system in power. Revelations of the widespread penetration of private lives by the former political police and the ubiquity of informers, including friends and family members, also created mixed public reactions. For

the most part, disgust blended with the desire to forget that shameful chapter in the history of formerly communist countries. Thus, with the exception of the Baltic states, both public and elite opinion seemed to come to the conclusion that domestic spying, as well as other, more serious crimes of the previous governments, should not be investigated and prosecuted—in order to avoid prolonged and acrimonious recriminations, and to preserve a semblance of national unity and social cohesion.

The intelligentsia too has been split in its attitudes toward the past. A minority sought better understanding and further research, as those in Hungary who are associated with the Institute of the 1956 Revolution. Others became preoccupied with the new (or revived) political conflicts and divisions, and with preserving indigenous cultural traditions in the face of the onslaught of Western popular culture.

The rise (or perhaps only the greater visibility) of corruption has been another source of disillusionment with post-communism. In both Russia and Eastern Europe, members of the former party elite took advantage of privatization and came to possess or control large parts of what used to be state property. They thereby entered, at a stroke, the ranks of the new rich. Other conventional forms of corruption also persisted or increased—bribery, exchange of favors, paying for supposedly free medical services with tips to nurses and physicians.

The fluidity of political attitudes in Eastern Europe has also been reflected in the swing of the pendulum between left and right parties in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. Communism has doubtless been discredited in Eastern Europe, but many people greeted the new, unfamiliar alternatives that emerged after the collapse with reservations, ambivalence, or outright hostility.

In the more advanced countries of Eastern Europe, the loss of interest in communism has also been the result of their growing westernization and the experience of the new problems that the process of westernization

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entails. As Hungarian philosopher Gaspar M. Tamas put it, “Regime change was in the first place liberation, but secondly a new chapter in the ongoing crisis of modern society.”<sup>28</sup>

The collapse of Soviet communism in the surviving communist states led to different responses. The rulers in Cuba and North Korea were determined to avoid anything resembling glasnost or perestroika that might have wetted popular appetites and expectations, and threatened their monopoly on power. In China, the loosening of political controls after Mao’s death culminated in the Tiananmen Square demonstrations and massacre, which indicated that the political will of the Chinese leadership did not waver. While retaining the monopoly on political power, the Chinese communist regime introduced sweeping economic reforms that legitimated the profit motive and led to high levels of economic growth. China is still a police state, but it has ceased to be totalitarian. As a Chinese dissenter has written, the state security remains “as restrictive as ever. . . . Like a spider in its web . . . the Security Bureau was always lying in wait for its prey.”<sup>29</sup> It remains to be seen how long the current (arguably precarious) coexistence of considerable economic freedom and strict political controls will endure.

### **Western Responses to the Collapse and Their Determinants**

Western responses to the collapse were in large measure determined by the prior perceptions of and attitudes toward communist systems. Those critical of communism rejoiced at its fall but they were not necessarily in a better position to explain why it happened or why it happened when it did. Sympathizers were at an even greater loss to explain and interpret the collapse. The following discussion focuses on the responses in the United States. In all probability, the discussion below is applicable to Western Europe as well.

After the initial euphoria, American public opinion as a whole has remained largely indifferent to the collapse of communism and sub-

sequent developments. Americans—both hostile and sympathetic to communist systems—knew little about them. The policies and characteristics of communist states used to be, and have remained, matters of indifference, except when the possibility of a conflict arose as during the cold war when the Soviet Union was the enemy. The mass media devoted limited attention to the collapse, its aftermath, and to communist societies in general. New opportunities for learning more about communist systems from field research or archival sources have not been fully utilized.<sup>30</sup> Massive ignorance persists among the public at large and even among the better educated. Few colleges or universities offer courses about the former or remaining communist systems, let alone their massive human rights violations.

### **Asymmetrical Reaction to Communism and Nazism**

Public awareness of the large-scale atrocities and human rights violations in communist states is minimal, especially in comparison to awareness of the Holocaust and Nazism.<sup>31</sup> These differences are symbolized by the contrast between the impressive and well-funded Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., and the absence of any corresponding institution devoted to the victims of communism.<sup>32</sup> It should also be noted that the physical remnants of the Nazi killing machine have been recovered, preserved, and images of it seen all over the world. The Communist killing fields have been for the most part inaccessible and poorly known. Little remains of the “Gulag Archipelago” and its equivalents in various former communist states.

Visual representations of those two systems in the mass media have also been vastly different. There have been few movies or television programs—either documentaries or feature films—dealing with communist societies or movements. By contrast there are, appropriately enough, countless offerings depicting Nazi Germany, Hitler, and the Holocaust.

During World War II, Hollywood actually made a number of pro-Soviet propaganda films, glorifying various aspects of the Soviet

regime. As a result of this discrepancy, negative stereotypes of Nazis and Nazism are familiar to American and Western audiences, whereas communist systems, their representatives, policies, and massive human rights violations remain (for the most part) abstractions.

The scholarly attention paid to the two systems has also been divergent. Studies of Nazism and the Holocaust are far more numerous and widely known than corresponding research and writing about communist systems. As Martin Malia noted, “Soviet social processes claimed victims on a scale that has never aroused a scholarly curiosity at all proportionate to the magnitude of the disaster.”<sup>33</sup>

Another telling discrepancy between the attitudes toward Nazism and communism is that few people have ever questioned the reliability or veracity of the information provided by surviving victims of Nazi persecutions—including surviving inmates of concentration camps and other refugees from Nazi Germany or Nazi-dominated territories. By contrast, the veracity of defectors and refugees from communist countries has often been subject of skepticism and even scorn, and deemed to be an unreliable source of information about the workings of the communist systems.<sup>34</sup>

An additional and thought-provoking illustration of those divergent attitudes can be found in the commercial use of communist symbols in advertising. We now have a lemonade soda, called “Leninade.” At HammerSick leStuff.com, you can buy “classy and novel panties, undies, thongs and bras with the Soviet hammer and sickle logo.” Adidas used to offer hats celebrating the People’s Republic of China, Castro’s Cuba, and the former Soviet Union. The last one came with the inscription, “Show your love of the former USSR during training time.”<sup>35</sup> There is also an overabundance of products bearing the images of Che Guevara (more about him below).

There are no Nazi symbols used in advertising. Evidently, Nazism is not considered a laughing matter by advertisers or marketing specialists. Advertisers feel free to joke about communism and use its symbols to sell a wide range of products. Communism, espe-

cially its Soviet variant, can perhaps be made fun of because of lingering (and partially correct) notions of Soviet inefficiency, disorder, and backwardness. By contrast, perceptions of Nazism entail stereotypes of cold and calculating German efficiency and orderliness. Those characteristics certainly marked the Nazi machinery of repression and are apt to generate impassioned moral indignation and judgment.

We can readily summarize the principal factors that determined the contrasting Western perceptions and moral assessments of Nazism and communist systems. They are as follows:

- Easy access to far more abundant visual images and evidence of Nazi wrongdoing and especially mass murders.
- The different methods used in each system to exterminate groups defined as undesirable.
- The different official ideologies, beliefs, and intentions that motivated the two sets of atrocities.

For all the above reasons, there remains a deep aversion in the West to postulating or acknowledging moral equivalence between Nazism and communism. The most important reason for treating the two totalitarian systems differently is the perception that communist mass murders were byproducts and unintended consequences of the pursuit of admirable ends, whereas the Nazi campaigns of extermination were the goals in themselves. The Nazis single-mindedly (one might say obsessively) pursued the extermination of a particular group, the Jews, by shooting or gassing them. By contrast, the larger proportion of the victims of communism were not executed; they died in forced labor camps as a result of harsh living conditions—illness, starvation, over-work, cold, poor or nonexistent medical services. Millions of inmates survived communist camps and prisons, only tens of thousands survived the Nazi concentration camps. It remains debatable what, if any, moral distinctions should be attached to killing peo-

**More recently, anti-Americanism and anti-capitalism have found expression in the rise to power of radical leftist political movements in Latin America.**

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ple in highly purposeful, technologically advanced manner, as opposed to achieving their liquidation (in much higher numbers, over longer periods of time) by inhumane living and working conditions in detention.

There were other morally relevant differences between the two systems. Communist states were not fixated on destroying any particular social or ethnic group or class of people. Those who were designated as politically undesirable (and their descendants) were not invariably and automatically sentenced to death. It was sometimes possible to escape such designation and its consequences by demonstrating loyalty to the system or by being useful to it. Rehabilitation was a theoretical and sometimes practical possibility, and, over time, policies changed and a larger proportion of those previously persecuted groups became tolerated. By contrast, under Nazi rule, belonging to undesirable racial or ethnic categories was an immutable condition, which had lethal consequences. The Nazis saw the Jews as representing unalterable, ineradicable evil that could not be tamed or reeducated, but required destruction. The Nazi designation of the enemy was much narrower but far more deadly. In communist states, not only class origin, but a broad range of social, cultural, demographic, and behavioral attributes could qualify a person to be designated as undesirable or suspect. The communist definition and classification of the enemy fluctuated—nobody was immune to suspicion. That fluctuation resulted in more victims over time and a greater overall sense of insecurity for the citizens in communist countries. Another important moral difference was that the communist authorities, unlike the Nazis, did not execute children but placed them in various institutions when their parents were incarcerated or executed.

In any event, the far greater number of victims of communist systems appears to carry less moral weight than the Holocaust, because of the mechanized quality of the Nazi mass murders. Nazi Germany murdered six million Jews. To that number we might add several million Soviet prisoners of war and civilians who lost their lives because of Nazi policies

and practices during the war. According to R. J. Rummel of the University of Hawaii, who specializes in studies of genocide, communist governments in the 20th century killed a total of 95 million people. Of those victims, the Soviet regime was responsible for 39 million deaths and China under Mao Zedong for 45 million. Martin Malia put the total between 85 million and 100 million. Tony Judt ascribes 20 million victims to the Soviet Union, 65 million to China and a combined total of 6 million to Cambodia, North Korea, Vietnam, and Eastern Europe. Robert Conquest cites the figure of 20 million Soviet victims. Dmitri Volkogonov, the Soviet historian, puts the number of the victims of Soviet repression between 19 million and 22 million.<sup>36</sup>

The far greater revulsion at Nazism could also be linked to a deep-seated aversion and ambivalence to modern industrial society on the part of Western elite groups, given the association of the Holocaust with modern technology, such as gas chambers and crematoria. In fact, critiques of the Holocaust are sometimes implicitly linked to critiques of Western industrial societies. Ideas such as “the banality of evil,” which was introduced by the philosopher Hannah Arendt, suggested that there was nothing truly distinctive about the Nazi policies and the mindset that led to the Holocaust. In her view, Eichmann-like human beings could be found anywhere in modern bureaucratic societies. In turn, studies by the social psychologist Stanley Milgram demonstrated the human propensity to obey authority even when that authority demands to inflict intense pain on human beings. His research suggests that a particular ideology or strong convictions need not play an important part in the infliction of pain, suffering, or death. What the Nazis did, in other words, could be duplicated elsewhere. As far as I know, no Western social scientist has sought to apply Milgram’s findings, insights, and methodology to the phenomenon of obedience to authority in communist societies.

There were also numerous morally relevant similarities between Nazism and communism that need to be noted. Both Nazi and commu-

nist campaigns of extermination and political violence had a cleansing, purifying goal. Those persecuted and killed were defined as socially, culturally, and morally harmful, as well as inferior and obstructive to the accomplishment of laudable objectives such as the creation of a better society or better world. The removal of such groups was often conceptualized as a surgical procedure. Only the idealistic or utopian component of both communism and Nazism could justify the scale of political violence undertaken. Communist ideals were, of course, much more attractive since they were more universalistic than the Nazi ones, which rested on an immutable racial hierarchy.

Both the Nazi and communist regimes treated the accomplishment of their utopian objectives very seriously. The Nazis diverted railroad cars—at the time desperately needed by the German military—to transport Jews to the extermination camps during a critical period in World War II. It is less well known that the Soviet authorities showed a similar determination to provide resources under conditions of scarcity for the deportation of suspect ethnic groups between 1943 and 1944. In the middle of the war “Stalin diverted thousands of trucks and hundreds of thousands of soldiers . . . in order to deport various people living in the Caucasus.” Earlier Beria deployed 14,000 troops from the war effort to deport German-speaking minorities.<sup>37</sup>

A further important similarity is that neither Nazi nor communist policies of victimization were, as a rule, based on actual behavior, but rather on belonging to certain categories or groups that automatically conferred on their members “socially undesirable” status. In the Soviet discourse, membership in “socially undesirable” groups amounted to involvement in “objective crime.” Whereas the Nazi categories were mainly racial and ethnic, the Communist ones related to social origin, status, class, kinship, and other personal connections. Expression of unorthodox or nonconformist political views, in both systems, was seen as political hostility that had to be crushed.

Third, both systems used a putatively scientific justification for their policies of extermina-

tion or persuctuion. One was defined by racial theories and the other by “scientific socialism” including, most relevantly, the Marxist doctrine of a class struggle.

Last but not least, both systems extracted labor from their victims prior to their death—the communist ones on a far larger scale than the Nazis. In the same vein, both treated common criminals better than political prisoners, and both persecuted homosexuals.

### **The Roots of Western Attitudes toward Communism**

The roots of the asymmetrical assessment of Nazism and communism in the West reach back several decades—to the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and McCarthyism. Each of those events contributed to the rise of what has come to be called “anti-anti-communism.” According to the latter, while communism is not exactly commendable, anti-communism (usually characterized as “irrational” or “obsessive”) has done more harm and is more disreputable and distasteful than communism.<sup>38</sup>

The roots of certain Western responses to the collapse of Soviet communism go back even further in time. There has been a long tradition of animosity toward commerce and capitalism on the part of Western intellectuals, and among idealistic and educated people. This animosity led to a benefit of doubt, or outright sympathy, toward political systems that were anti-capitalist, denounced the profit motive, and proclaimed as their goal the creation of a more humane, just, and egalitarian society of altruistic human beings. The Soviet Union was the first such society. It was followed by Eastern Europe, China, Vietnam, Laos, North Korea, Cuba, Grenada, and Nicaragua, as well as Angola, Ethiopia, and Mozambique.

The past misperception and idealization of those countries and their political systems had an unmistakable and apparently ineradicable influence on the responses to their collapse or partial transformation. Longstanding beliefs, even if ill conceived, are difficult to discard, especially when they are integral to the sense of identity of an individual or the group he or

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**Both systems used a putatively scientific justification for their policies of extermination or persecution.**

she belongs to. Left-wing political ideals and affiliations have been important sources of identity for large numbers of educated people in Western societies—especially since the 1960s. They have been closely associated with youthful idealism, a sense of community, and notions of self-realization.

The misperceptions and misjudgments of communist societies had recurring patterns and components.<sup>39</sup> They were seen as striving to realize the ideals of Marx and Engels, and by doing so attaining high levels of socioeconomic equality and social justice. They were also judged to be enjoying broad popular support and legitimacy. They were supposed to be societies in which the perennial conflict between personal and public interest was largely transcended (or in the process of being transcended), and in which most social pathologies or defects that afflicted capitalist societies had vanished (or were in the process of vanishing). These defects included unemployment, lack of work satisfaction, crime, juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, drug addiction, homelessness, unequal access to education and healthcare, sexism, and the degradation of the natural environment. Even communist prisons were considered superior settings for the humane treatment and the rehabilitation of wrongdoers.

Communist societies were also lauded for their apparent success in dramatically raising the standard of living, rapid modernization, rational economic planning, and providing access to political participation for all citizens. It was also widely believed by those favorably disposed that those countries were led by exceptionally wise, kind and knowledgeable leaders. Last but not least, many Western intellectuals believed that communist systems were permeated by a new sense of purpose and community, banished alienation, and made life meaningful and satisfying for the great majority of their citizens.

Most of those assessments were based on predisposition, wishful thinking, the assertions of the communist propaganda, conducted tours in the communist countries and, most importantly, a profound disaffec-

tion with the societies in which those intellectuals lived. That dissatisfaction led to susceptibility to the attractions of communist societies that were seen as promising alternatives to Western corruptions, injustices and irrationalities. Many of those beliefs came to be scaled down or discarded over time, but they left a residue. The qualified disillusionment with communism left intact the critiques and rejection of Western societies—especially of the United States.<sup>40</sup>

It is important to note here that the contrast between the attitudes of “New Left” and “Old Left” toward the Soviet Union has been greatly exaggerated. The New Left of the 1960s (and its spiritual successors) certainly lost interest in and enthusiasm for the Soviet Union. But that change in attitude did not lead to a searching and critical look at the broader ideas associated with the left. Orthodox communist families produced many of the well-known 1960s activists—the so-called “red diaper” babies—who admired the Soviet system. As the American sociologist Todd Gitlin wrote about them, “They had grown up breathing a left-wing air . . . being different, touched by nobility and persecution. . . . The majority of New Leftists were not the children of Communist or socialist parents, but some in adolescence were . . . influenced . . . by children who were. From them the rest of us absorbed, by osmosis, the idea and precedent, and the romance of a left.”<sup>41</sup> The radical political activist Angela Davis toured the Soviet Union in the early 1970s and her admiration for the Soviet system was duly recorded in a contemporary Soviet publication. Kathy Boudin, who belonged to the Weather Underground—the most violent faction of the New Left—and who went to jail for her actions, was the daughter of old-leftist, pro-Soviet Leonard Boudin, prominent lawyer and defender of many leftist clients.<sup>42</sup> Similar connections and affinities between the old and new left abound.

### **Coping with the Collapse**

Several strategies were developed by those on the left to deal with (or to evade) the problems created by the collapse of Soviet commu-



nism. While at the time of its collapse, the Soviet Union was no longer idealized by left-leaning Western intellectuals, the collapse called into question their deeper, prior commitments and convictions and offered an opportunity for some political and ideological soul-searching. But few undertook such soul searching because, even after the collapse, there remained some sympathy towards what used to be called “the Soviet experiment.” This lingering sympathy was also revealed by the outrage and scorn that greeted President Ronald Reagan’s characterization of the Soviet Union as “an evil empire.” These attitudes rested on several considerations:

- The Soviet Union was not a capitalist society and was opposed to those that were. This fact by itself gave the Soviet Union a huge moral credit.
- The Soviet Union was an adversary of the United States and, as such, a restraint on American imperialism and a defender of the more authentic revolutionary Third World countries, such as Cuba.
- Even if many things went wrong in the Soviet Union, it sought to realize, at least initially, the hopes and ideals of Marxism.

Eric Hobsbawm, the famous British Marxist historian, exemplifies these attitudes most vividly. For him, the USSR remained a sentimental repository of hopes for a better world. As he put it, “I belonged to the generation tied by an almost unbreakable umbilical cord to hope of the world revolution and its original home, the October Revolution.”<sup>43</sup> Hobsbawm personifies a typical response to the collapse of Soviet communism that manages to neutralize the large volume of negative information that became available about it. On the one hand, he admits that communist systems such as the Soviet Union were deeply flawed and that the good intentions of their creators had horrific unintended consequences. On the other hand, he perseveres in regarding those intentions and the ideas that underpinned them as admirable and inspiring. He averred, “I think the dream

we had is a great dream, whether you call it a socialist dream or . . . the dream of general liberation. . . . I think the people who devoted their life to this were enormously good people.”<sup>44</sup>

Did he include among those “good people” Stalin or the heads of the Soviet political police, like Yuri Andropov, Lavrentiy Beria, Felix Dzerzhinsky, and Nikolai Yezhov? The leaders of the Soviet satellite states, like Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania, Mathias Rakosi of Hungary, and Walter Ulbricht of East Germany? They all devoted their lives to the “dream” Hobsbawm still reveres and one that caused untold suffering.

Another approach to dealing with the problems created by the collapse of the Soviet Union is exemplified by John Cole, an anthropologist formerly at the University of Massachusetts, who blamed the collapse on Western capitalism: “The communist countries should have stayed on a road of purely socialist development instead of giving in to their citizens’ demand for a more consumer-oriented economy. But because the West had the consumer goods, it was able in the 1980s to hoodwink the communist world into becoming trading partners, which tied its economic well-being to the West’s. . . . The decline in the 1980s of world capitalism nailed Eastern Europe.”<sup>45</sup>

An almost reflexive recourse to moral equivalence between communism and capitalism was another popular response to the collapse of the Soviet empire and its aftermath. According to the more radical leftists, regardless of what was wrong with communist systems, the greater evils of capitalism remain in place and demand utmost critical attention. It was imperative not to allow the collapse and its moral implications to distract attention from the evils of capitalism. Paul Sweezy of the *Monthly Review* hopefully wrote, “As far as global capitalism is concerned, its internal contradictions will hardly be affected one way or another [by the collapse] . . . These contradictions . . . continue to multiply and intensify, with all indications pointing to the maturing of one or more serious crises in the not so distant future.”<sup>46</sup> Tom Wicker, the prominent

**There has been a long tradition of animosity toward commerce and capitalism on the part of Western intellectuals.**

**Few of Che's admirers know or are ready to admit that he was also a ruthless fanatic.**

journalist, in an article that began with references to the Czechoslovak celebration of the collapse of their communist regime wrote, "Freedom. . . is not a panacea and that communism failed does not make the Western alternative perfect, or even satisfying for millions of those who live under it."<sup>47</sup> After surveying the changes in Eastern Europe, Daniel Singer of the University of Michigan concluded, "our task is to spread the conviction that a radical change of society in all its aspects is on our own historical agenda. In the long run, the collapse of the Stalinist model should help us in this search for a socialist alternative. . . . The Western left should get on with its job. It must attack the very foundation of our own system . . . its incapacity of growth for any purpose other than profit . . . its commercialization of art, culture and even human relationships; its exploitation of the Third World and its perpetuation of social, sexual and racial inequities."<sup>48</sup> Sheldon Wolin of Princeton University used the collapse to renew his critique of American society and to compare communist regimes favorably with the former. "In the past decade the perceptions and sensibilities of many Americans have been Reaganized, shaped by counterrevolutionary concerns regarding welfare, health care, ecology, government regulation of business . . . the rights of minorities and women. . . . Even acknowledging gross distortions, Communist regimes have been the only ones that professed and to some degree achieved a commitment to equality."<sup>49</sup> One wonders if Wolin would have been equally impressed if the governments of Western countries professed their commitment to equality without doing much about it. He seemed unaware of the politically determined privileges of elite groups (and the associated, large, inequalities) in communist systems.

Another popular response to the collapse among many academic intellectuals has been the assertion that communism had nothing, or next to nothing, to do with Marxism. Therefore, the fall of communism did not bring disrepute to Marxism. That position was not limited to American leftists. Jutta

Ditfurth, a West German leftist, "argued at a panel discussion at Humboldt University in East Berlin [that] there simply is no need to reexamine socialism's validity as a model because it was not socialism that was defeated in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union because these systems were never socialist."<sup>50</sup> Paul Robeson Jr., an American civil rights activist, came to believe that what he considered the "death of Stalinism" amounted to the "birth of socialism."<sup>51</sup> Professors Sam Bowles of the University of Massachusetts and Philip Green of Smith College averred that "for the first time in history there is a chance of a true socialist and democratic state, one based on the writings of Karl Marx. . . . Eastern Europe now will lead the way in creating the first truly socialist nations . . . The soil in Eastern Europe is prime for true socialism to take root."<sup>52</sup>

Many Western intellectuals believed that the Soviet system (even if no longer idealized) represented a valid and successful path to modernization and was in some respects morally superior to the capitalist West. The Soviet Union was also considered stable and durable. Its abrupt collapse came as an unpleasant surprise to many Western intellectuals who often anticipated with relish the impending crisis and collapse of capitalism instead. To cope with what psychologist Leon Festinger called "cognitive dissonance," they now resorted to denying that the Soviet Union was Marxist or "genuinely" socialist. If it was not Marxist or socialist, the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union did not matter, or mattered a lot less. In any event the collapse did not threaten Western intellectuals' belief that capitalism was more corrupt and doomed to collapse eventually.

Perhaps the most absurd and bizarre argument put forward in defense of Marxism appeared in an editorial in *The Nation*: "The exodus of . . . East Germans . . . cannot be interpreted . . . as an abandonment of the teachings of Karl Marx. . . . The country to which they are traveling . . . is not Thatcher's Britain or après-Reagan America . . . The new emigrants have chosen capitalism with a human face [i.e., West Germany]. . . . And so the newcomers

have gone from Stalin back to Marx.”<sup>53</sup> Evidently it did not occur to the writer of that editorial that the appeals of West Germany had little to do with the political and economic differences between West Germany on the one hand and Britain and the United States on the other. West Germany was literally a walking distance from East Germany. People spoke the same language and East Germans were automatically given West German citizenship.

Another widely used exculpatory technique was to call the collapsed system, or its defects, “Stalinist” thereby transferring the wrongs of the system onto an individual. That technique, chosen by Khrushchev and his successors in the Soviet Union, was singularly un-Marxist, given the deemphasis of Marx on the role of the individual in the historical processes. Blaming Stalin for all that went wrong in the Soviet Union was eagerly adopted by Western intellectuals and communist apologists in order to avoid confronting the obvious question: Why did the system allow or enable individuals such as Stalin (and others in other communist states of similar character) to rise to power, accumulate huge amounts of power, and exercise it in the most arbitrary manner to the obvious detriment of millions of people?

Sometimes the weaknesses of human nature and false consciousness, which the new socialist environment apparently failed to eradicate, got blamed for the defects of the communist system. For example, Alan J. Spector of Purdue University and Peter Knapp of Villanova University wrote, “the main reason that communism has not been realized is that sufficient numbers of people do not understand why it is required and what it requires.” The same authors “do not believe that the failure [of the communist systems] is a failure of Marxism.” After all, they argued, “the Soviets were trying something for the first time in history and it is hardly surprising that they made mistakes.”<sup>54</sup>

The proliferation of new causes or renewed preoccupation with old ones were also among the responses embraced on the left to avoid dealing with the collapse of communism. That was a path chosen by many academic

intellectuals who immersed themselves in multiculturalism, identity politics, postmodernism, radical feminism, post-colonial studies, cultural studies, deconstructionism, more esoteric explorations of Marxist theory, and new critiques of American society.

### **Persistence of Communist Ideas**

Not only individual intellectuals but entire professional associations of American academic intellectuals have expressed favorable attitudes toward communist systems. The Latin American Studies Association has repeatedly taken positions supportive of Castro’s Cuba and Sandinista Nicaragua. The professional association of anthropologists has taken similar stands. During the Vietnam War, numerous other professional organizations passed resolutions supportive of North Vietnam and the Vietcong. In 1990, the Organization of American Historians defeated a motion that welcomed glasnost in Soviet historiography and expressed regret that the Organization of American Historians “never protested the forced betrayal of the historians’ responsibility to truth imposed upon Soviet and East European historians by their political leaders.”<sup>55</sup> To the best of my knowledge, none of these professional associations ever protested violations of human rights in communist police states or the crushing of uprisings in East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, or Poland in the early 1980s, or the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the large-scale atrocities committed by the Soviet forces in that country. They had expressed no displeasure about the post-World War II show trials in Eastern Europe, the mistreatment of fellow academics in China during the Cultural Revolution, the imprisonment of dissenters in Cuba, or the longstanding persecution of religious believers in all of those countries.

Another indication of the persistence of communist sympathies in the West is the praise heaped on present day leftist systems—especially Venezuela under Hugo Chávez. Bill Ayers, the former Weather Underground leader, delivered a speech “at Hugo Chavez’s side in

**For Western intellectuals, the morally repellent attributes of communist systems remain abstractions.**

**When political beliefs satisfy important emotional needs and bolster a favorable self-conception, they are likely to endure.**

Venezuela in 2006. . . . He told the assembled revolutionaries that education 'is the motor force of revolution' and Venezuela shows the path of how 'to overcome the failings of capitalist education.'" He ended his speech with "Viva Presidente Chávez! Viva la Revolución Bolivariana!"<sup>56</sup> Clearly, Ayers found Venezuela under Chávez a promising setting on which to project his lifelong political values and aspirations fueled by his relentless loathing of his own society. Similarly, Cindy Sheehan, a prominent protestor of the Iraq War, embraced (literally and figuratively) Hugo Chávez at a rally in Caracas, Venezuela. Chávez, in turn, assured her "Cindy, we are with you in your fight." As the *New York Times* reported, "Mr. Chavez has become a voice for many opponents of the Bush administration who are drawn to his self-styled socialist revolution and his close alliance with . . . Fidel Castro." Hollywood celebrities such as Sean Penn, Danny Glover, and Harry Belafonte have also embraced Chávez.<sup>57</sup>

Communist Cuba continues to elicit warm feelings from famous Western intellectuals and entertainers, including the late playwright Harold Pinter, author Nadine Gordimer, musician Harry Belafonte, and writer Tariq Ali, who "signed a letter claiming that in Cuba 'there has been not a single disappearance, torture or extrajudicial execution since 1959.'"<sup>58</sup>

Even North Korea was occasionally given the benefit of the doubt. In the spring of 2006, the Harvard Alumni Association organized a tour of that country. This was not intended as a critical fact-finding mission since all such tours are strictly controlled by the North Korean authorities. The tour memo instructed the tourists that they "will be expected to bow as a gesture of respect at the statue of Kim Il Sung." The memo explained that such bowing is appropriate because "North Korea like every country has its unique protocols."<sup>59</sup> On his goodwill visit to North Korea in 1994, former President Jimmy Carter "heaped praise on Kim Il Sung . . . [saying] 'I found him to be vigorous, intelligent, well informed.'" Carter also noted "the reverence with which they [the North Korean people] look upon their leader."<sup>60</sup>

The continued cult of Guevara, including the stunning commercialization of his image, is yet another indication of the persistence of the attitudes discussed herein. Michiko Kakutani of the *New York Times*, wrote: "Che lives! Not just in the heart of revolutionaries, Marxist insurgents, and rebellious teenagers, but on t-shirts, watches, sneakers, key chains, cigarette lighters, coffee mugs, wallets, backpacks, mouse pads, beach towels and condoms. . . . He has also been employed by merchants to sell air fresheners in Peru, snowboards in Switzerland, and wine in Italy. The supermodel Gisele Bündchen pranced down a runway in a Che bikini. . . . An Australian company produced a 'cherry Guevara' ice cream line."<sup>61</sup>

Che Guevara is of course closely identified with Cuba—one of the few surviving orthodox communist systems. He is widely seen as the personification of the authentic, idealistic revolutionary—his authenticity warranted by his death while organizing a guerilla movement in Bolivia. He reminded I. F. Stone, the famous American investigative journalist (revered by those on the left), of Jesus. He wrote: "In Che one felt a desire to heal and pity for suffering. . . . It was out of love, like the perfect knight of medieval romance, that he set out to combat with the powers of the world. . . . He was like an early saint."<sup>62</sup>

Most of Che's Western admirers only know of his heroic death and, possibly, of his belonging to a small group of revolutionaries who, led by Fidel Castro, landed in a small boat in Cuba to start a guerilla movement that eventually overthrew the regime of Fulgencio Batista. But few of his admirers know or are ready to admit that he was also a ruthless fanatic, capable without hesitation to order the execution of those he regarded as obstacles to the utopian social system he wished to create. He was the classic embodiment of the revolutionary intent on redeeming mankind, but profoundly indifferent toward concrete, individual human beings. In his own words, he extolled "hatred as an element of struggle: unbending hatred for the enemy, which pushes a human being beyond his natural limitations, making him into an

effective, violent, selective and cold-blooded killing machine.”<sup>63</sup>

The publication by Harvard University Press and the academic popularity of a book entitled *Empire*, coauthored by convicted Italian terrorist Antonio Negri and filled with radical-left rhetoric and glorification of political violence, also testifies to the continued attractiveness of ideas inspired by Marxism and the hatred of Western capitalist democracies.<sup>64</sup>

The faith in the essential innocence of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were executed for spying for the Soviet Union in 1953, also persists. They are often “portrayed as martyrs for civil liberties, righteous dissenters.” As the American historian Ronald Radosh wrote, “To this day this received wisdom permeates our educational system. A recent study . . . has found that very few college textbooks say simply that the Rosenbergs were guilty. . . . Most either state that the couple were innocent or that the trial was ‘controversial’ or they excuse what [they] did by saying ‘it was not that bad. What they provided wasn’t important.’”<sup>65</sup> At a Fordham University Law School Forum in 2006, Tony Kushner, an American playwright and screenwriter, argued that the Rosenbergs were “murdered.” E. L. Doctorow, an American novelist, asserted that the Rosenberg case was fabricated to fan the flames of the Cold War and to impose on the American public “a Puritan, punitive civil religion.”<sup>66</sup>

The rehabilitation of certain well known 1960s radicals, some of whom were earlier engaged in acts of violence, is also symptomatic of the continued attractiveness and respectability of the ideas and ideals they championed. The case of Bill Ayers is the most noteworthy. A petition on his behalf that was signed by over 3,000 “educators” (including two editors of the moderate socialist *Dissent* magazine and a number of well known professors and writers) portrays him as “a victim of McCarthyite slurs.”<sup>67</sup> An op-ed article by the *New York Times* columnist Gail Collins belittled or dismissed serious charges against him.<sup>68</sup> He was twice interviewed in the *New York Times Magazine* and given an opportunity

to put forward his views and rebut his critics.<sup>69</sup> In December 2008 the *New York Times* provided him with space for a self-serving op-ed article in which he protested his designation as an “unrepentant terrorist.”<sup>70</sup> This is the same man who was quoted in another *New York Times* article in 2001 as saying that “I don’t regret setting bombs . . . I feel we didn’t do enough.”<sup>71</sup> In his memoir, Ayers has written of his bombing of the Pentagon: “Everything was absolutely ideal on the day I bombed the Pentagon. The sky was blue. The birds were singing. And the bastards were finally going to get what was coming to them.”<sup>72</sup>

## Prospects

Why have the beliefs and attitudes herein examined persisted among substantial numbers of Western intellectuals and portions of the educated public? The most important reason is the continued, profound aversion to capitalism made more plausible by the recent global financial-economic crisis and the steep growth of executive compensation in recent years. Capitalism is also held responsible for the subversion of nation states, the exploitation of the Third World, and the destruction of nature. But the deepest roots of anti-capitalism are spiritual. Capitalism is blamed by its most ardent critics for undermining the most precious attributes of human nature. As Norman Mailer put it, “In America it is not that surplus value is extorted from us so much as that we are spiritually exploited and denied the opportunity to find our true growth.”<sup>73</sup> Even the free-market economist Joseph Schumpeter wrote that “capitalism creates a critical frame of mind, which, after having destroyed the moral authority of so many other institutions turns against its own. . . . The rationalist attitude does not stop at the credentials of kings and popes but goes on to attack private property and the whole scheme of bourgeois values.”<sup>74</sup>

More generally speaking, the discontents and problems of modernity persist and are often identified with and blamed on capital-

**The Communist Party was not composed of the most selfless and idealistic representatives of the working classes.**

**Few colleges or universities offer courses about the former or remaining communist systems, let alone their massive human rights violations.**

ism. Most important among them, for the present discussion, are the perception of social isolation and of a decline of the sense of community and purpose.

Western intellectuals who remain attracted to communist ideals never had the disillusioning experience of living in an actual communist or socialist society. For them, the morally repellent attributes of communist systems remain abstractions that cannot compete with the vividness and personal experience of the flaws and injustices of Western societies.

Communist ideals have also retained and regained some of their attractiveness because of some of the trends and developments in former communist states. While some former communist states succeeded in creating stable capitalist democracies, the most important one, Russia, has regressed to authoritarianism and aggressive nationalism. In most former communist countries, new inequalities and abuses of power emerged, while the inequities of the old regimes, never well-known in the West, are being rapidly forgotten.

Last but not least, the continued attractiveness of communism rests on the human capacity to dissociate ends from means, good intentions from poor results, ideals from realities, and theory from practice. Arthur Koestler called this capacity to assign an overwhelming moral importance to the ends while overlooking or dismissing the human costs of those ends “the doctrine of unshakable foundations.”<sup>75</sup>

Communist ideals persist because it is always easier to retain familiar, deeply internalized beliefs held over long periods of time than to radically revise or discard them. Such beliefs are especially compelling to hold on to when they are widely shared—as is the case with the entire left-of-center, adversarial ideological heritage and subculture left behind from the 1960s. Millions of people in the West associate communist ideas and ideals with their youth, youthful idealism, and their better selves. These ideas have become an integral part of their sense of identity, especially of intellectuals who are uncertain of their social

function, while being drawn to the role of righteous critics of their society. When political beliefs satisfy important emotional needs and bolster a favorable self-conception, they are likely to endure.

## Notes

1. The Eastern European communist states collapsed in 1989, symbolized by the removal of the Berlin Wall, but the Soviet Union itself dissolved only in 1991.
2. The concept of alienation was developed and widely used by Marx to describe the negative impact of capitalism on industrial workers as well as society as a whole. The workers, Marx asserted, had no control over their working conditions, wages, and more generally, their entire life; they were exploited, deprived materially and spiritually, and incapable of experiencing work satisfaction. The term alienation came to be used more widely to designate a feeling of exclusion, impoverished social relations, incomprehension of the social order, and stunted human development.
3. For a few representative definitions and discussion of totalitarianism see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1969); *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, ed. Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); *Totalitarianism in Perspective*, ed. Carl J. Friedrich, Michael Curtis, and Benjamin R Barber (New York: Praeger, 1969); Tom Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); A. James Gregor, *Contemporary Radical Ideologies: Totalitarian Thought in the 20th Century* (New York: Random House, 1968); Paul Hollander, “Observations on Bureaucracy, Totalitarianism and the Comparative Study of Communism,” *Slavic Review*, June 1967; Barrington Moore, “Totalitarian Elements in Pre-industrial Societies,” in his *Political Power and Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958); Leonard Schapiro, *Totalitarianism* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1972); J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (New York: Mercury, 1961).
4. There were some anticipations of a collapse of the Soviet Union that did not entail specific estimates as to when it might occur. They were based on the belief that the system was inherently weak, backward, badly administered, possessed little legitimacy, and was plagued by chronic and systemic economic difficulties. Such beliefs were expressed, among others, by Andrei Amalrik, Robert Con-

- quest, F. A. Hayek, Bernard Levin and Ludwig von Mises. Edward Crane, founder and president of Cato Institute, predicted in 1982 (following a visit to the Soviet Union) that the Soviet system “would collapse in 20 years of its own weight.” *Toward Liberty: The Idea That Changed the World*, ed. David Boaz (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 2002), p. 166.
5. For a summary of such perceptions see Paul Hollander, “Judgments and Misjudgments” in *The Collapse of Communism*, ed. Lee Edwards (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2000).
6. Richard Kapuscinski, a Polish author wrote: “just before the break-up of the USSR, the view of that country as a model of the most stable and durable system in the world had gained wide acceptance among Western Sovietologists” in *Imperium* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1994), p. 314.
7. Alexander Dallin: “Causes of the Collapse of the USSR,” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, no. 4. (July-September 1992), p.282.
8. Valentin Turchin, a prominent Soviet dissenter, aptly summed up the internal perceptions of the system that prevented people from conceiving of change: “the basis of the social order [in the Soviet Union] is considered by its citizens as absolutely immutable. . . . They consider it a given, as Newton’s Law. When you fall don’t blame gravity.” Quoted in David Shipler, *Russia* (New York: Times Books, 1983), p. 194.
9. Stephen F. Cohen, *Soviet Fates and Lost Alternatives: From Stalinism to the New Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 90, 149.
10. “Nomenklatura” refers to the party elite, the full-time functionaries. It also refers to all higher-level appointees in the military, government bureaucracy, economy, education institutions, etc., that required party approval.
11. Richard Pipes, “The Fall of the Soviet Union” in *The Collapse of Communism*, pp. 42, 46.
12. Martin Malia, “The Highest Stage of Socialism,” in *The Collapse of Communism*, p. 71.
13. Milovan Djilas and Vasilije Kalezic, *The Fall of the New Class: A History of Communism’s Self-Destruction* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1998), pp. 289, 302.
14. Quoted in *Russian Culture at the Crossroads*, ed. Dmitri N. Shalin (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), p. 121.
15. Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Breakdown v. 3: Its Rise, Growth and Dissolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 527.
16. Alexander Wat, *My Century: The Odyssey of a Polish Intellectual* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), p. 173.
17. Thomas Aczel and Tibor Meray, *Tisztito Vihar* (Munich: Griff Kiado, 1978), p. 276.
18. See also Paul Hollander, “Crossing the Moral Threshold: The Rejection of Communist Systems in Hungary and Eastern Europe” in *Resistance, Rebellion and Revolution in Hungary and Central Europe: Commemorating 1956*, ed. Laszlo Peter and Martyn Rady (London: Hungarian Cultural Centre, 2008).
19. Cohen, pp. 123, 124, 129, 131, 134.
20. See also John Clark and Aaron Wildavsky, *The Moral Collapse of Communism* (San Francisco, CA: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1990).
21. See also Paul Hollander, *The Only Super Power: Reflections on Strength, Weakness and Anti-Americanism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).
22. See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992).
23. For a recent debate on revisionism see the *Slavic Review*, Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 issues. In the former, prominent revisionists reappraised and reconfirmed their positions; in the latter, critiques of those positions were published. See also Peter Kenz, “Stalinism as Humdrum Politics,” *Russian Review*, October 1986; and Paul Hollander, “Moral Responses to the Great Mass Murders of Our Century,” in *Discontents: Postmodern and Postcommunist*, ed. Paul Hollander (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002).
24. “Introduction,” in *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*, ed. Andras Bozoki (Budapest: CEU Press, 1999), p. 6.
25. James R. Millar and Sharon L. Wolchik, *The Social Legacy of Communism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 1994), p. 7.
26. Quoted in Stephane Courtois et al., *Black Book of Communism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. XIII.
27. See Eva Jaskovska and John P. Moran, “Justice or Politics? Civil and Political Adjudication in the Newly Independent Baltic States,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, December 2006.
28. *Masvilag—Politikai Esszek* (or *Another World:*

- Political Essays*) (Budapest: Uj Mandatum, 1994), p.8.
29. Kang Zhengguo quoted in Jonathan Mirsky, "He Won't Give In," *New York Review of Books* (February 14, 2008), p. 47.
30. An important exception has been the *Annals of Communism* series published by Yale University Press, based on previously inaccessible documents from former Soviet state and party archives.
31. For earlier discussions of these differences by this author see "Resisting the Lessons of History, or How the Adversary Culture Responded to the Disintegration of Communism," in Paul Hollander, *Decline and Discontent: Communism and the West Today* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992); Hollander, "Moral Responses to the Great Mass Murders of Our Century" in *Discontents: Postmodern and Postcommunist* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002); and "Introduction: The Distinctive Features of Repression in Communist States," in Paul Hollander, *From the Gulag to the Killing Fields* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2006), esp. pp. xx-xxxix.
32. There is a Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in Washington, DC, but its efforts so far have resulted only in a virtual, online "museum" that concerns communist systems and their victims and a small sculptural memorial in the District of Columbia.
33. Courtois et al., p. x.
34. For some examples see Frederick Schuman's review of Kravchenko's *I Chose Freedom* in the *New Republic*, May 6, 1946; and Arch Getty's fulmination about the lack of integrity of defectors in *Stalinist Terror: New Perspectives*, ed. J. Arch Getty and Roberta T. Manning (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 40-41; for an article calling into question the accounts of Pol Pot's terror by Cambodian refugees see Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, "Distortions at Fourth Hand," *The Nation*, June 25, 1977; also by the same authors, *After the Cataclysm* (Boston: South End Press, 1979). In turn, Nicholas Kristof cautioned about taking at face value reports of former inmates of the North Korean Gulag; see his "Survivors Report Torture in North Korean Labor Camps," *New York Times*, July 14, 1996.
35. Jay Nordlinger, "Undies, Comrade? The Problem of Products Bearing Communist Symbols," *National Review* (July 6, 2009).
36. R. J. Rummel, "War Isn't the Century's Biggest Killer," *Wall Street Journal*, July 7, 1996; see also his *Lethal Politics: Soviet Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1917* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers 1996); Courtois et al., p. x; Tony Judt, "The Longest Road to Hell," *New York Times*, December 22, 1997; Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 485-86; Dmitri Volkogonov, *Victory and Tragedy: The Political Portrait of Stalin* (Budapest: Zrinyi, 1990), p. 413.
37. Courtois et al., pp. 16, 217.
38. For a discussion of anti-anti-communism, see Paul Hollander, *The Survival of the Adversary Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988), esp. pp. 24-25. Also Paul Hollander, *Anti-Americanism: Irrational and Rational* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), esp. pp. 21-22. I do not know who introduced the term, possibly Sidney Hook. The spirit of anti-anti-communism is given an illuminating, sentimental reflection in Vivian Gornick, *The Romance of American Communism* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).
39. For a rich repository of such misperceptions and misjudgments see, by this author *Political Pilgrims: Western Intellectuals in Search of the Good Society* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998); see also "The Pilgrimage to Nicaragua," in Paul Hollander, *Anti-Americanism*; also "Judgments and Misjudgments."
40. On disillusionment with communist systems as well as the resistance to such disillusionment see Paul Hollander, *The End of Commitment: Intellectuals, Revolutionaries and Political Morality* (Chicago: I. R. Dee, 2006), esp. Chaps. 7 and 9.
41. Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), pp. 20-21.
42. Olga Chechetkina, *Andzela v Sovetskom Souze* (Angela in the Soviet Union), Moscow, 1973; Susan Braudy, *Family Circle: The Boudins and the Aristocracy of the Left* (New York: Knopf, 2003), pp. 132-133.
43. Quoted in James Kurth, "If men were angels. . . Reflections on the world of Eric Hobsbawm," *National Interest*, Summer 1995, p. 9.
44. Quoted in Robert Conquest, "Who Was Right, Who Was Wrong and Why?" *Encounter* (September 1990), p. 29.
45. Quoted in Ron Grossman, "The Marxist Brothers," *Chicago Tribune*, March 18, 1991.
46. Paul M. Sweezy, "Is This Then the End of Socialism?" *The Nation* (February 26, 1990), p. 278.
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48. Daniel Singer, "Revolutionary Nostalgia," *The Nation* (November 20, 1989), p. 600; and Daniel



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51. Quoted in Donald Bauer, "Leftists in the Wilderness," *U.S. News and World Report* (March 19, 1990), p. 27.
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55. Wilcomb E. Washburn, *The Treason of Intellectuals* (Herndon, VA: Young America's Foundation, 1991), p. 18.
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62. "The Legacy of Che Guevara," *Ramparts*, December 1967, p. 21.
63. Quoted in Alvaro Vargas Llosa, "The Killing Machine," *New Republic*, July 11, 2005, pp. 25, 26.
64. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2000).
65. Ronald Radosh, "Case Closed: The Rosenbergs Were Soviet Spies," *Los Angeles Times*, September 17, 2008.
66. Joseph Rago, "Rosenberg Reruns," *Wall Street Journal*, January 27, 2006.
67. Paul Berman, "Bill Ayers Fan Club," DailyBeast.com (October 15, 2008), <http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2008-10-15/bill-ayers-fan-club/>; Ronald Radosh, "The Real Threat Posed by Bill Ayers."
68. Gail Collins, "Clearing Ayers," *New York Times*, October 9, 2008.
69. "Questions for Bill Ayers: Forever Rad," *New York Times Magazine*, September 16, 2001; "Radical Cheer," *Ibid.*, February 15, 2009.
70. Bill Ayers, "The Real Bill Ayers," *New York Times*, December 5, 2008.
71. Dinitia Smith, "No Regrets for a Love of Explosives," *New York Times*, September 11, 2001.
72. Bill Ayers, *Fugitive Days: A Memoir* (New York: Beacon Press 2001), p. 256. The statement quoted is followed by a convoluted disclaimer. Further down on the same page he wrote: "the government was dead wrong, and we were right. In our conflict we don't talk; we don't tell. We never confess."
73. *New Yorker*, Letters, October 6, 2008, p. 57.
74. Joseph Alois Schumpeter, *Democracy, Capitalism, Socialism* (New York: Harper 1950), p. 144.
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