

# REVIEW and OUTLOOK

## A Voice From the Depths

We have seen few things in recent years more worth reprinting than Alexander Solzhenitsyn's remarkable Nobel Prize lecture. But beyond even the intrinsic merits, we have another reason for printing the long excerpts alongside. Most of the commentary in the United States has missed what seems to us the real point, or at least the point most pertinent to the West.

Parts of the lecture not printed here have been much remarked. Some have been expected parts; Solzhenitsyn's reflections on his years in the Soviet slave labor camps, and his mourning for other artistic souls who did not survive them. Some were unexpected parts, such as his stinging criticism of the United Nations and its double standards. But the parts are scarcely enough to give a coherent grasp of what Solzhenitsyn had on his mind.

Solzhenitsyn has spent time in labor camps and in exile. His major works are not published in Russia. When awarded the Nobel Prize in 1970, he could not go to the presentation for fear the Soviet government would not allow him to return to his native land. The Swedish government refused to transmit his lecture, and it has only now been smuggled out and published by the Nobel Foundation. No man has any greater right to rail at the insensitivities and brutalities of governments, at the excesses of repression.

Yet now that his voice emerges from the depths, what does it say? Yes, there is matter-of-fact recounting of Soviet brutality, which to describe is to condemn. Yes, there are remarks on the lack of moral sensitivity by governments, the United Nations, scientists. Yet it is none of these that moves Solzhenitsyn to his deepest pessimism. Rather, it is the moral sickness of the West, the collapse of values, the "spirit of Munich."

Values are out of phase, the laureate tells us. Quite clearly his view is that the fault lies not only with the repressiveness of Eastern dictatorships. It lies also with the increasing nihilism found in the Western democracies.

"The young, at an age when they

have not yet any experience other than sexual, when they do not yet have years of personal suffering and personal understanding behind them, are jubilantly repeating our depraved Russian blunders of the 19th Century, under the impression that they are discovering something new," he writes. "In shallow lack of understanding of the age-old essence of mankind, in the naive confidence of inexperienced hearts they cry: let us drive away those cruel, greedy oppressors, governments, and the new ones (we), having laid aside grenades and rifles, will be just and understanding."

The blame does not really rest with the youth. "But of those who have lived more and understand, those who could oppose the young—many do not dare oppose, they even suck up, anything not to appear conservative."

Solzhenitsyn's insight is that man needs to repair to a set of values that lends order to his surroundings and propriety to his actions. He needs to believe in "unchanging, universal concepts of goodness and justice." In bombings and hijackings and labor strife, there are signs that such a set of values no longer restrains. "As seen from the outside, the amplitude of the tossing of Western society is approaching that point beyond which the system becomes unstable and must fall."

These words were of course written two years ago, near the height of the short-term crisis through which Western society has apparently started to pass. Yet that itself was only a symptom of the long-term crisis Solzhenitsyn sees. For that he finds hope in art. It is literature that will reconcile the values, that will communicate the lessons of one generation to the next, of one land to another.

About the lessons that Russian literature can communicate to us in the West Solzhenitsyn is quite clear. They are lessons about the need for constants, about the real results of unchecked idealism. But before they can be communicated there must be a willingness to listen, and a willingness to understand what is heard.

## Thinking Things Over

By VERMONT ROYSTER

### Three Jacks

At Pearl Harbor the other day the Navy turned out for a bit of ceremony—the usual sort of thing, bands playing, flags being hauled up and down. Admiral John Sidney McCain Jr. was turning over his command as Commander in Chief, U.S. Armed Forces in the Pacific, on his way to retirement after 40 years in the Navy.

It was all pretty much routine. Somewhere some general or admiral or old time sergeant is always being mustered out. He gets his day's pomp, his name in his home-town paper perhaps, but nobody else notices or cares very much. The military is not much thought of these days.

Besides, Pearl Harbor is not what it used to be. No battleships now around Ford Island, no destroyers crowding West Loch, only an occasional carrier shuttling through between home and Vietnam. Only a few hands at the ceremony could even remember when it was otherwise.

There's not much reason to notice this ceremony either, except to add a little footnote to the announcement. For it happens that Admiral Jack is the son of Admiral Jack—he of Task Force 38—and the father of Lieutenant Commander Jack—he presently a prisoner of war in Hanoi. Together they span this century of the U.S. Navy.

The elder Jack McCain was commissioned as an Ensign in 1906. It was not a propitious year for a Mississippi boy to begin a naval career. The forces that would soon plunge Europe into a war were already gathering and President Theodore Roosevelt was trying to revive the Navy. But the American public was little interested.

The brief war with Spain was over, the quarrels of Europe were none of our business, and if our relations with Japan were strained there was still the wide Pacific as a moat between us and that emerging naval power. President Roosevelt, in fact had just won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Work on the Panama Canal had been suspended. There was no base at all at Pearl Harbor. Taxpayers were grumbling about the Navy budget. Promotions were slow.

Yet in his time Jack McCain was called on to fight two world wars, the first as a junior officer, the second as an admiral. In that series of engagements known as the Battle for Leyte Gulf he commanded the carriers of Task Force 38. On Sept. 2, 1945, he was present on the USS Missouri to witness the Japanese surrender. Four days later he was dead.

His son, the second Jack, was commissioned in 1931, an even more inauspicious year for launching a naval career. The euphoria of the disarmament conferences of the 20s had cut back on both ships and personnel; during the Hoover administration, for the first time since Washington's, no naval combat ship was launched. The depression was on, and the Navy could not even commission all its academy graduates.

It was a time too when all the military was in public disfavor. We had won the war to end wars, and the cry was "Never Again!" In England young men were vowing never to fight for king and country. In campuses across this country, the students were militantly antimilitary; everywhere there sprang up leagues against war—any war.

In Europe, to be sure, Hitler and Mussolini

## Spirit of Munich'

quish at her failures and glowing successes.

conflict between this type of decent, aspiring individual—the world—and the of power, political hatred—is speaking and as- has his