



Memory of Evil Dies With Writer

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Alexander Solzhenitsyn is dead. Peter Rodman is dead. And memory is dying with them.

Over the weekend, Solzhenitsyn, the 89-year-old literary titan, and Rodman, the American foreign policy intellectual, passed away. I knew Rodman and liked him very much. We were partners in a debate at Oxford University last year. He provided the gravitas.

A former protege of Henry Kissinger and high-ranking official in two Republican administrations, Rodman was one of the wisest of the wise men of the conservative foreign policy establishment. Calm, elegant, dryly funny, brilliant, but most of all gentlemanly. He died too young, at 64, of leukemia.

Solzhenitsyn was, of course, a landmark of the 20th century, one of the few authors capable of elevating literature to the stuff of world affairs.

What I admired most in both men was their memory. They remembered important things, specifically the evil of communism. And, perhaps nearly as important, they remembered who recognized that evil and who did not.

Rodman, for example, was an architect of the Reagan Doctrine in places such as Angola and Afghanistan. One of his books, "More Precious Than Peace: The Cold War and the Struggle for the Third World," was the quintessential defense of thwarting the Soviets in ugly spots of the globe where Americans were understandably reluctant to spend blood or treasure.

In Berlin on July 24, Barack Obama's history of the Cold War sounded cheerier. There was a lot of unity and "standing as one," and we dropped some candy on Berlin, and now we need to be unified like we were then.

But unity was hardly the defining feature of the Cold War. There were supposed allies reluctant to help and official enemies who were eager to do their share. There were Russians — like Solzhenitsyn — who bravely told the world about Soviet barbarity.

Here at home, there were a great many Americans, including intellectual heirs to the "useful idiots" Lenin relied on, who rolled their eyes at self-styled "cold warriors" such as Rodman. And from Vietnam through the SANE/ Freeze movement, liberal resolve and unity were aimed most passionately against America's policies — not the Soviet Union's.

Having recently published a book on fascism, I think I understand why so many people refused to see the evil in communism. It was wellintentioned. The Soviets were our allies in World War II. Communists spoke of socialism and liberation, and their agents, friends and apologists in the U.S. were comrades in arms with Americans battling racism.

But it's worth remembering how evil Communist governments really were. Stalin murdered more people than Hitler. The hammer-and-sickle's stack of bones towers high above the swastika's. "The Black Book of Communism," a scholarly accounting of communism's crimes, counts about 94 million murdered by the supposed champions of the common man (20 million for the Soviets alone), and some say that number is too low.

If, after the moral cataclysm that was the Holocaust, you wish to say that the Nazis were more evil than the Soviets, fine. But don't roll your eyes at serious people who consider anti-communism no less honorable and righteous than anti-Nazism.

Look to the Holodomor in Ukraine, where 4 million to 6 million people were murdered and a culture largely erased. Terror, purges, massacres, assassinations and the forced starvation of millions — these are all horrors that we rightly associate with Nazism but somehow fail to correlate with communism.

In 1974, when the New Yorker reviewed Solzhenitsyn's "The Gulag Archipelago," George Steiner wrote: "To infer that the Soviet Terror is as hideous as Hitlerism is not only a brutal oversimplification but a moral indecency." When Ronald Reagan denounced the "evil empire" — because it was evil and it was an empire — he too was accused of absurd oversimplification.

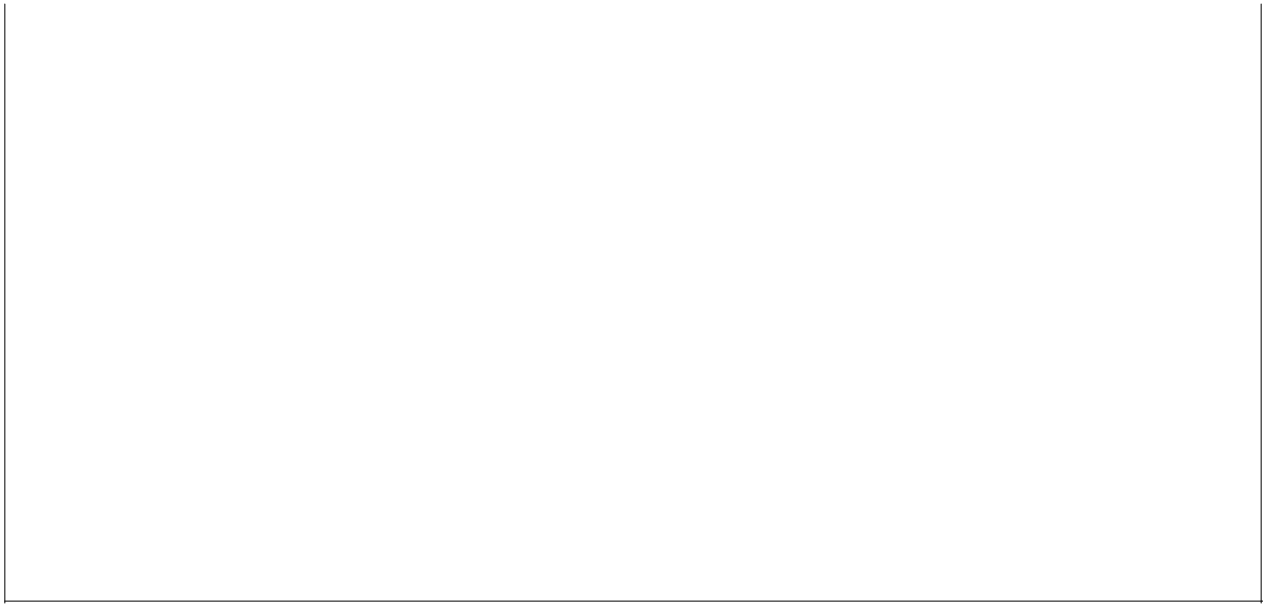
The real brutal oversimplification is the treacle we hear from Obama, that victory in the Cold War was some Hallmark-movie lesson in global hand-holding. The reality is that it was a long slog, and throughout, the champions of "unity" wanted to capitulate to this evil, and the champions of freedom were rewarded with ridicule.

"This is the moment," Obama proclaimed, "when every nation in Europe must have the chance to choose its own tomorrow free from the shadows of yesterday." Rodman and Solzhenitsyn understood that such talk was dangerously naive. People free from the "shadows of yesterday" forget things they swore never to forget.

Solzhenitsyn and Rodman are gone now, and a generation that learned such hard lessons is leaving us too quickly. The amnesia bites a little deeper.

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