



Warning to the West

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn , Harris L. Coulter (Translator) , Nataly Martin (Translator)

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Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Warning to the West* includes the texts of the Nobel Prize-winning author's three speeches in the United States in the summer of 1975, his first major public addresses since his expulsion from the Soviet Union in 1974: on June 30 and July 9 to trade-union leaders of the AFL-CIO in Washington, D.C., and in New York City, and on July 15 to the United States Congress; and also the texts of his BBC interview and radio speech, which sparked widespread public controversy when they were aired in London in March 1976.

Solzhenitsyn's outspoken criticism of the West's growing weakness and complacency and his belief that Russia's growing strength will enable her to establish supremacy over the West without risk of a nuclear holocaust are expressed with the moral authority of a great novelist and historian.

"Solzhenitsyn mounts a public indictment of the supine inattention of the West that rings like the blows of the hammer with which Luther nailed his manifesto to the doors at Wittenberg."--*Times Literary Supplement*

Warning to the West Details

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From Reader Review Warning to the West for online ebook

Ken says

Good chunks of this book -- a collection of Solzhenitsyn's mid-'70s speeches to US labor unions and the US Senate, along with interviews with the BBC -- are dated or moot. However, there are enough nuggets of historical wisdom and prescience that made a read of "Warning to the West" worthwhile (the book runs only around 150 pages).

Some examples:

Solzhenitsyn excoriates the "burning greed among Western capitalists for profit that goes beyond all reason, all self-control, all conscience, only to get money." (Solzhenitsyn, to be sure, was no fan of Marx or socialism, either.) He notes that such capitalists wouldn't hesitate to "strengthen the economy" of his native country if there was profit in it, so that the "Soviets will buy from one rather than from the other." One could substitute "Soviets" for Saudi Arabia -- with Trump ignoring the murder of a Washington Post journalist by the Saudi Crown Prince, stating that we want the Saudis to buy our weapon systems -- and Solzhenitsyn's observation would be very much up to date, some 40-plus years later.

Solzhenitsyn also gets at Trump's amoral and craven transactionalism-as-foreign-policy, willfully ignoring civil and human rights violations: "One cannot think only on the low level of political calculations. It is also necessary to think of what is noble, and what is honorable -- not just of what is profitable. Resourceful Western legal scholars have now introduced the term 'legal realism,' which they can use to obscure any moral evaluation of affairs. They say, 'Recognize realities: if certain laws have been established in countries ruled by violence, these laws still must be recognized and respected.'"

Joe says

Essential reading, no matter what your political leanings are. Solzhenitsyn warns against being politically simple and believing in supposedly liberal regimes. This collection of speeches is well-written, and you can really hear the author's voice come out in each speech. The message remains consistent with his fears of a failing west, and it's consistent with his other works (although much shorter and more digestible).

Very appropriate that I finished this book on the day of a massive change in America; going into a Trump presidency. In these speeches, Solzhenitsyn predicts the election of Trump-like leaders all the way back in 1975, and for all the correct reasons that he saw already manifesting themselves 40 years ago. Although I remain mostly skeptical of Trump, and disgusted by his character, this book gave me a bit of hope that the next 4 (or 8) years may be necessary to really change the political landscape of both America and the world at large, and may result in an actual progressive reaction that has been promised for the last few decades.

John says

This is an excellent collection of speeches and one interview. Solzhenitsyn understands and articulates the fundamental evil of communism as well as the flaws found in the West. This is a good, short introduction

into the thought of Solzhenitsyn. Highly recommended.

Pieter says

A collection of interviews with and speeches of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn dating from the mid '70s. The author states his admiration for the West (US and Western Europe), but warns for its policy of détente and appeasement with the USSR and its allies.

Of course, history has proven that communism has fallen apart in no more than 15 years later. But this joyful event is mainly thanks to activism from pope John Paul II and former president Ronald Reagan, who may have read the book. Brandt's Ostpolitik and US policy of appeasement have only prolonged the communist terror for a couple of decades. Solzhenitsyn states that without Western help (food, technology,...) the regime would have given up much quicker.

I can imagine many communists would not like to be reminded of their fellow travelling during the 20th century. We better remind them as often as we can, because these cultural marxists are more active as ever in destroying marriage and promoting mass immigration. The blood on their hands does not wash away that easily.

Hadrian says

Collection of essays and speeches which encapsulate Solzhenitsyn's thought. They'd serve as a good introduction - warning about the terror of the Soviets, as well as calling for vigilance on the part of the West.

Audrey says

Wow. This little collection of speeches gives profound insight into the spread of communism as the author attempts to explain how our human nature and politics allowed and ignored the spread of the most murderous ideology in history.

Sad, yes. But even more eye-opening and thought-provoking.

Samuel says

This is a fascinating book for a couple of reasons. The book is several speeches and an interview Mr. Solzhenitsyn gave in 1975 after being released from the Soviet Union where he spent much of his life in Soviet concentration camps.

Mr. Solzhenitsyn was released largely due to the pressure put on the Soviet Union by the West, the U.S. and Great Britain in particular, and when he arrives in the West, what he finds sucks any optimism out of his balloon, he feels the West is very quickly losing he sees many of the same things in the West that he saw in the Russia before the revolution, which leads him to believe the West is heading for the same fate.

What is interesting about this is, his fears were not realized, the '80s came the West changed direction and the Soviet Union fell. This isn't to say his fears were unfounded, perhaps instead they were heeded and it saved us from disaster. The other interesting thing is, I believe were he alive today, he would have the same message and the same fears. Socialism, the beast that was vanquished at the end of the Cold War his back in style and making the same old promises it made in 1918 in Russia and has always made. We are being told this time it is different, but this is the same thing that is said every time.

Mr. Solzhenitsyn's warning to the west is just as relevant today as when he spoke the words almost a half century ago.

Roger says

Totalitarian Communism may no longer be the greatest threat to Western liberalism, but the attributes of East and West that are described by this victim of repression are no less timely.

His warnings are as applicable to a world confronted by religious radicalism and economic fascism as they were during the Cold War. Hopefully my generation does a better job of listening than my parents and grandparents.

Gyoza says

This book consists of four speeches and one BBC interview given by Solzhenitsyn to American and British audiences during the mid 1970's. In them, he talks about his observations about dangerous tendencies in Western culture and intellectual climate that could lead to weakness and lack of preparedness to face the Communist threat. Among them are the West's refusal to recognize the true nature of Communism despite straightforward exposition of it, lack of moral clarity, a materialist view of the world and of human nature, unwillingness to take a strong stance against the threat, and lack of interest in the plight of its victims. He also points out some trends in the culture of that time (which are still trends today) that mirror conditions in imperial Russia before the Revolution.

I think this book is still very relevant today because even though the Cold War is over, we're not through with totalitarian movements yet, as can be seen in the destructive Islamist movements in the Middle East. Solzhenitsyn points out that the temptation to create heaven on earth no matter what the cost is a recurring theme throughout history, and we must be in constant vigilance to guard against it.

Joel Robb says

"From 1917 to 1959, Socialism cost the Soviet Union 110 million lives"

"Mut verloren, alles verloren" -- "When courage is lost, all is lost" (German proverb)

"When it happens to you, you'll know it's true"(Russian proverb)

"There is another myth here too, namely that socialism represents a sort of ultra-modern structure, an alternative to dying capitalism. And yet it existed ages and ages before any sort of capitalism. My friend Academician Igor Shafarevich has shown in his extensive study of socialism that socialist systems, which are being used today to lure us to some halcyon future, made up the greatest portion of the previous of mankind

the ancient East, in China, and were repeated later in the bloody experiments of the Reformation. As for socialist doctrines, he has shown that they emerged far later but have still been with us for over two thousand years; and that they originated not in an eruption of progressive thought as people think nowadays but as a reaction--Plato's reaction against Athenian democracy, the Gnostics' reaction against Christianity--against the dynamic world of individualism and as a return to the impersonal, stagnant system of antiquity... we cannot help but shudder as they proclaim certain features of that terrible form of society... is this really the social ideal for which they would be prepared to sacrifice the lives of countless others and even to sacrifice their own?" (pg 142-143)

Rachel Smith says

I haven't read much on Solzhenitsyn, so this book was sort of an introduction. It's interesting how much is still relevant today; it's also interesting to consider the feelings of a Cold War world. I was born after the USSR collapsed, so it's a difficult thing, in many ways, for me to really grasp and understand what was going on. I think that is an issue many folks of my age group and younger run into, and I think it's a huge part of why so many young people tend to support the idea of socialism.

I enjoyed many of the speeches. It's a good introduction to both a period of history, like a peek into the past, and also a good introduction to Solzhenitsyn and other dissidents of the USSR.

Varmint says

as i recall, these speeches were initially delivered before an audience of spoiled whiney lazy rich kids at harvard. solzhenitsyn told them to stop being so spoiled whiney and lazy, or they'd get eaten alive by the totalitarians.

the spoiled whiney lazy kids did not like the speech.

Peter says

Solzhenitsyn's warnings to American, Britain, and Europe are much more controversial as well as cynical than Hayek's Road to Serfdom. Definitely still relevant to today's politics regarding totalitarian and communist regimes.

Ryan Williams says

Short, concise and relevant, even today.

Anna Murray says

Spectacular!! I can't believe that I majored in political science and took many courses from an expert on Russia and never once heard of Mr. Solzhenitsyn. This collection of speeches given in 1975 and 1976 is just as poignant today, if not more so, as it ever was.

From an interview in March 1976: "[A]t the moment the question is not how the Soviet Union will find a way out of totalitarianism but how the West will be able to avoid the same fate." And this: "The press does not feel responsibility for its judgments, it makes judgments and attaches labels with the greatest of ease. Mediocre journalists simply make headlines of their conclusions, which suddenly become generally accepted."

From a speech on July 9, 1975: "Communism has never concealed the fact that it rejects all absolute concepts of morality. It scoffs at any consideration of "good" and "evil" as indisputable categories. Communism considers morality to be relative, to be a class matter... Communism is anti-humanity."

I could go on and on quoting the keen observations of this artist from Soviet Russia, but really, you should just read the book. It is not easy, I am sure, for many Westerners to honestly reflect on these observations, but it is becoming increasingly necessary, if we wish to maintain our civilized society, to ponder the realities of the world, as opposed to the world as we wish it to be.
