

# Past and Future Gulags, Part I

*Part II*

by [Pedro Blas González](#) (October 2019)



*In the NKVD's Dungeon, Nikolai Getman*

Vladimir Solovyov's insightful *The Crisis of Western Philosophy* can enlighten us today as to the importance of re-telling history to educate subsequent generations. With its reference to man's philosophical ability to seek truth, the book offers postmodern man much needed perspective about our infatuation with collective movements that can only gain traction through coerced re-education.

Man's history is the history of ideas. In turn, ideas originate in the thought of differentiated persons. The negation of this fundamental truth is tantamount to asserting that birds are capable of flight, not because they have wings, but because they live on a planet with wind. Solovyov explains,

Philosophical knowledge is expressly an activity of the personal reason or the separate person in all the clarity of this person's individual consciousness. The subject of philosophy is reeminently the singular I as a knower . . . Philosophy is a separate world-view of separate individuals. The common world-view of nations and tribes always has a religious, not a philosophical character.[\[1\]](#)

The Importance of Re-Telling History in Lieu of the Re-Education Program of Radical Ideologues in Western Democracies

Solovyov's contention is that philosophical vocation is incommensurate with the party-line that dictates how a thinker ought to think. Commitment to the party mentality violates the idea that the genuine man-of-letters, or what is called today the intellectual, ought to be a free thinker first and foremost.

[Read more in New English Review:](#)

- [The Putin System: An Investigation](#)
- [Inoculate Against Rhinogradentia](#)
- [An Architect with Aloof Disdain](#)

Lamentably, postmodernism has turned Western civilization into a colossal and tragic re-education camp. How can truth, beauty and the moral virtues that enabled man to thrive and attain contentment in former times inform human existence in a time that asphyxiates longing for such a pathos?

Intellectuals should exercise good will. What happens in the absence of good will is that man turns to political expediency, and ultimately, tyranny.

The morally vacillating and radical ideologue, Jean Paul Sartre, is a fine example of the former. Jean Paul Sartre's romantic foray into Cuban communism in the 1960s must have seemed to him like a profound personal statement, given his perceived self-importance in aiding the cause of man's alleged universal suffrage. Sartre's radical ideology came into conflict with his anemic moral sense. The essence of this conflict was the culprit that brought the friendship between Sartre and Albert Camus to a halt. Sartre tells his side of

the story in an article entitled "Reply to Albert Camus" that appeared in the August 1952 issue of *Les Temps Modernes*. Sartre's article is a reply to a prior article by Camus entitled "A Letter to the Editor of *Les Temps Modernes*" that had previously appeared in that same periodical. In his merciless article, Sartre and other French communist intellectuals attacked Camus as being a bourgeois thinker. Camus criticized Sartre's defense of the communist party, this, vis-à-vis Sartre's embrace of Stalinism.

### Creators of the Soviet Gulag

It seems natural that in the best interest of man's capacity to distinguish truth from falsehood, we are periodically reminded of prime examples of the devastation that radical ideology's nihilism brings about in human history. The latter is systematically covered up by radical ideologues in their campaign of re-education, which emulate the slander and misinformation techniques first brought about by Lenin.

The latter is now applied to all aspects of Western civilization through the social-political radicalization introduced by the crafty social-engineers of the Frankfurt School. Let us reflect about the function of intellectuals in a totalitarian system?

In recent times, Jürgen Habermas, the last living member of the Frankfurt School has tried to re-habilitate—safe face—the Marxist ideology of the Frankfurt school, much like failing corporations often seek to re-structure the organization.

Habermas' trying to embrace metaphysics and the role of religious belief in human life in his latest work is simply a case of too little too late. The fundamental tenets of his anti-metaphysical philosophy make his social-political philosophy as rationally sound as a house of cards.

It is estimated that Stalin murdered over 1,500 writers using the resources, first of the *Cheka* (Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-revolutions and Sabotage), and later that of the *GPU* (State Political Administration), which was formed in 1922. These figures are based on recently declassified KGB archives that are easily accessible. This is just a conservative estimate, because in communist regimes the objective weight of data, statistics and facts disappear as quickly as its most vocal dissidents.

These pogroms took place in part in order for Stalin's government to reward the writers and thinkers who promoted communism by belonging to the communist party's union for writers. These are considered heroes of Stalinism. This was Stalinism in-the-making; communist realism cannot tolerate dissidents. Stalinism demanded that committed writers devote their entire energy to the service of the state. Those who refused do so were considered reactionaries—intransigent at best—and were labelled enemies of the state, the alleged workers' paradise of the new Soviet man. This was the framework that permitted millions to be persecuted and executed. People who were alleged enemies of the state were sent to the Soviet gulag, the longest lasting and elaborate version of concentration camps. It is important to recognize that Soviet concentration camps became a vehicle of communist terror in every communist country, not just the Soviet Union. This proves how easy it is to prostitute and subvert reason to the cause of barbarity. Many Western intellectuals defend

crimes committed in communist regimes as excusable, alleging ignorance of the system, or due to Western critics' failure to understand the implications of dialectical materialism.

From the outset of the October Revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik program for Russia was marked by a stringent hate for ideas, that is, genuine thought, which is apolitical.

John Reed, a radical American from Oregon, best known for his book about the Bolshevik takeover of Russia entitled *Ten Days that Shook the World* was an obstreperous Greenwich Village rich, communist malcontent. Mr. Reed detested American democracy so intensely that he founded the American Communist Movement in 1919. For his internationalist's loyalty, Reed was eventually rewarded by being buried in the Kremlin Wall—the same honor offered to the infamous member of the Cambridge spy ring, Kim Philby. [\[2\]](#)

In 1913 Reed was writing for the communist magazine *Masses*, which was at the time edited by Max Eastman. Concerning his preference for literature, Reed has the following scathing words,

We refuse to commit ourselves to any course of action, except this: to do with the *Masses* exactly what we please . . . we don't even intend to reconcile our readers . . . poems, stories, drawings rejected by the capitalistic press on account of their excellence will find a welcome . . . we intend to be arrogant, impertinent, in bad taste, but not vulgar . . . to attack old systems, old morals, old prejudices . . . to set up new ones in their places .

. . bound by no creed or theory of social reform, we will express them all, providing they be radical.[3]

The egregious problem with this provision is that it has nothing to do with literature and everything with communist ideology.

William Barrett, who in the estimation of many commentators, has painted one of the most in-depth and telling pictures of the hypocritical double standard of Western radical ideologue intellectuals of the Twentieth Century, explains the problem in the following way:

In politics, for example, that his own continued existence as a dissenter depends on the survival of the United States as a free nation in a world going increasingly totalitarian. If his thinking deliberately operates outside the paths of our common life, he complains that he has been alienated. In fact, in no age of history has the intellectual been more influential upon human affairs than in the modern world. Consider the intellectuals of the French Revolution: they have shaped the world we live in, and they were truants, if we may believe Edmund Burke.[4]

Barrett, who was a longtime Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University, writes this from a first-hand account as former editor of *Partisan Review*. His is an intimate portrayal of the post WWII social-political mindset of some of the leading New York intellectuals with whom he often communicated. Among these, he includes Delmore Schwartz, Mary McCarthy, Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling and Philip Rahv.

Barrett points out in his masterful work *The Truants: Adventures Among the Intellectuals* that his indictment of radical ideology is on the grounds that communism depended on a great part for its alleged legitimacy on the support of Western writers and thinkers. He explains:

Never mind Burke's own politics, consider him for the moment only as an observer. He happened to be an uncommonly sharp one, and he was in a privileged position to notice the advent of this new breed of mankind—the modern intellectual. These Frenchmen whom he observed were literary intellectuals and they loved large and sweeping abstractions, often without regard to the complex inner working of the very prosaic details that make social life at all possible. My God, how they loved The People! But Burke, as an experienced parliamentarian who had been active on many bills of legislation, knew there was no such thing at all as The People: there was only a multitude of concrete groups, furriers, weavers, farmers, merchants, with sometimes quite conflicting interests, which had to be balanced and reconciled somehow or other into the actual working of society. As soon as you have replaced this concrete plurality by the abstraction of The People, you have homogenized it into the Mass—a plastic and passive dough to be kneaded at will by the dictator. You have taken the first step toward Gulag.[\[5\]](#)

The utility of writers in communist countries is celebrated as being social engineers of the soul. In the Soviet Union, engineers of the soul comprised the intelligentsia, which was responsible for creating the new soviet man, a subservient entity who was forged with a hammer and the butt of a bayonet. Intellectuals are invaluable to communist countries because that system receives its alleged legitimacy in the eyes of



Internationalists, through propaganda and misinformation that is aimed at destabilizing Western democracies.

Terror is communism's main weapon of mass control. In order to create terror for its citizens and abroad, an elaborate mechanism of lies, the re-writing of history, re-education and brainwashing is necessary. This is why intellectuals are immensely useful in communist countries. Useful writers make a pact with the devil. Intellectuals who place their services at the mercy of the terror state find this to be their way of contributing to communist countries. They are rewarded in a degree that they would never enjoy in a democratic open society.

In the Soviet Union, eastern bloc nations and throughout the communist world, the list of writers who criticized the government and who were persecuted for it is quite extensive. Western intellectuals cannot imagine the crude reality of the fate of dissidents in communist countries. From being ostracized by family and at work, to imprisonment, torture and execution, these individuals perished while other intellectuals enjoyed the rewards offered by the state to collaborators. Those who were released back into society from prison underwent the humiliation of being sent to re-education camps for their alleged crimes against the state. The immorality of placing a thinker or any dissident on trial because of their unwillingness to be used at the mercy of murderous regimes is unimaginable to people who live in democratic open societies. Prisoners in open and democratic societies are common criminals.

In communist countries, political prisoners are those who oppose the one-party system. People are signaled out as

political prisoners not for delinquent activities, but because in communist countries no aspect of human life can be allowed to remain un-political. The reality of total politicization of life in communist countries remains baffling to people who live in democratic societies and have never lived in a communist country.

This is an aspect of communist ideology that was first introduced to Western democracies by Marxist intellectuals of the Frankfurt School in the 1930s, and on a massive scale beginning in the 1960s. Gathering strength throughout the last sixty odd years, today this very same politicization of all aspects of life in open societies—in the form of politically correct censorship—is the foremost threat to the continual stability of Western democracies. With its sinister campaign of re-education for political opponents fully in place today, political correctness has converted the liberties enjoyed in open societies into the same spiteful double morality practiced in communist countries. The censorship of political correctness creates distrust and cynicism among citizens in Western democracies.

We need only to mention a few of the writers who have been victimized by communism to begin to witness the scope of this human tragedy. Among these outstanding writers and thinkers, we encounter Boris Pasternak, writer of the monumental novel *Doctor Zhivago*, who was expelled from the union of soviet writers and forced to publicly renounce his Nobel Prize in 1958.

[Read more in New English Review:](#)

- [Richard Strauss and the Survival of Western Culture](#)
- [Craig Considine's Bridge to Nowhere](#)

- [Let's Bring Back HUAC](#)

We have also witnessed the well-known case of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a writer who had to immigrate to the United States after being deported to Germany in 1974. Solzhenitsyn's books *Cancer Ward* and *The Gulag Archipelago* have helped to open the eyes of people in Western democracies to the horrors of Soviet communism. Solzhenitsyn served with the Red Army in World War II, but was later arrested and imprisoned from 1945 to 1953 for criticizing Stalin. Solzhenitsyn is a fine example of a dissident who was re-habilitated in 1956. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* is his account of life as a political prisoner—the gulag—in the Soviet Union.

Still today, there are many Western intellectuals who continue to defend the legacy of communism by alleging that the former communist countries were not Marxists at all. This is a last-minute effort to separate themselves from the aberrant failures of communism and its many postmodern hybrid forms.

Most importantly, we must recognize that denial is a central component of the dialectical mechanism of Marxism. By negating its prior stage of development, Marxism continually remakes itself. It remakes itself without shame in light of the colossal available data against the communist system. Marxism decries that a new and much improved Marxism is to be unveiled. This informs the notorious Soviet five-year plans. In other words, the triumph of Marxists thought and logical outcome in practice is measured in an infinite series of five-year plans that, by design, are impossible to fulfill.

Alleging that Marxism necessitates further theoretical framework, the framers of this radical ideology do not act in the best interest of the common man, but instead for the sinister and self-serving implementation of their radical theories and power. We can compare this to a scientist who refuses to abandon previously tried, erroneous, and failed theories that cannot be worked into the scheme of human reality. People who do not understand or know how to identify sophism in postmodernity will not recognize the latest embodiment of radical ideology in our time. This is the great danger today for Western open societies. This is why re-education has made the inroads that it has achieved in Western democracies.

To this day, we continue to encounter profound ignorance by intellectuals of the crimes against humanity perpetrated by communism. This has occurred because of the incessant desire to lessen the evils of communism by intellectuals who have too much time and reputations invested in Marxism.

---

[\[1\]](#) Vladimir Solovyov, *The Crisis of Western Philosophy: Against the Positivists*. Translated and edited by Boris Jakim. (Hudson, N. Y.: Lindisfarne Press, 1996), 13.

[\[2\]](#) Philip Knightley, *The Master Spy: The Story of Kim Philby*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 263. The author writes: "Wheatcroft argues eloquently that Philby and his ilk were power worshippers. He says they must have known the nature of the murderous dictatorship of Lenin and Stalin and yet they continued to believe it. Why? He says that, like any religious faith, communism required a suspension of belief, but that blind credulity could not be the whole answer because men as intelligent as Philby, Burgess, Blunt and their like could not

fail to notice the truth.”

[3] John Reed, *Ten Days That Shook the World*. Forward by V. I. Lenin. (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), xix.

[4] William Barrett, *The Truants: Adventures Among the Intellectuals*. (Garden City, N.Y.:Anchor Books, 1979), 13.

[5] *The Truants: Adventures Among the Intellectuals*, 14.

«[Previous Article](#) [Table of Contents](#) [Next Article](#)»

---

Pedro Blas González is Professor of Philosophy at Barry University, Miami Shores, Florida. He earned his doctoral degree in Philosophy at DePaul University in 1995. Dr. González has published extensively on leading Spanish philosophers, such as Ortega y Gasset and Unamuno. His books have included [Ortega's 'Revolt of the Masses' and the Triumph of the New Man](#), [Human Existence as Radical Reality: Ortega's Philosophy of Subjectivity](#). He also published a translation and introduction of José Ortega y Gasset's last work to appear in English, "Medio siglo de Filosofía" (1951) in