

1981

## Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: The Address, Twelve Early Responses, and Six Later Reflections

W.F. Long Jr.

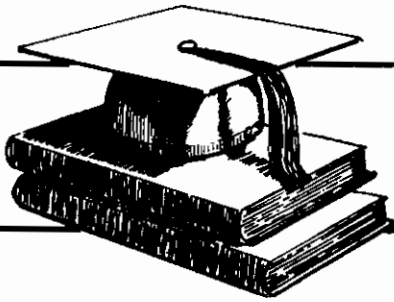
Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Long, W.F. Jr. (1981) "Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: The Address, Twelve Early Responses, and Six Later Reflections," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 34 : No. 2 , Article 9.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol34/iss2/9>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).



# PROFESSIONAL READING

## BOOK REVIEWS

Berman, Ronald, ed. *Solzhenitsyn at Harvard: The Address, Twelve Early Responses, and Six Later Reflections*. Washington: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1980. 143pp.

Solzhenitsyn's Harvard commencement address in 1978 was sufficiently big to create a new elephant for exploration by those groping for support for their own predilections, such as the tail is a rope, etc. This book is an attempt to reinterpret the speech and early "journalistic" responses by compiling them with six "new interpretive" essays. The book is organized into three sections; the speech, early responses and later reflections. Ronald Berman is both editor and contributor, and because his is the overarching view and voice, it is tempting to zoom past Solzhenitsyn to Berman. However, it seems essential at least to read the speech and, at the start, to accept what the speaker says to the letter and in the spirit of his major concern—the purpose of life. In this respect, it might be best to start at the end—the 17th part of the speech—then go back to the beginning. In the end, Solzhenitsyn is pleading for a spiritual life and even provides a way, "Only by the voluntary nurturing in ourselves of freely accepted and serene self-restraint can mankind rise above the world stream of materialism" and it is clear that he is a believer in God and man's responsibility to God and to society as the source of spirituality with which to

oppose technological materialistic emptiness and legalistic selfishness.

The second part of the book, the early responses, mainly demonstrates the natural defensive tendencies of those who represent the groups directly connected with the aspects of Western life most criticized, e.g., the press. The criticism in these 12 pieces may be hasty, but is not entirely superficial. Olga Andreyev Carlisle's "Solzhenitsyn's Invisible Audience" coincides with a similar point made in the *Naval War College Review* article, "Solzhenitsyn in Harvard Yard: An Old Believer Spoke from the New World" (February 1979). Without referring to Solzhenitsyn's 5 September 1973 "Letter to the Soviet Leaders," which provides rich detail, she identifies him with the new Russian nationalists, the *Russity*, their fear of China and contempt for Marxism, etc. Ms. Carlisle is an artist and writer who helped in the publication of two of Solzhenitsyn's books in the West before he was exiled. The thrust of her thought (and mine expressed in the *Review* article) is at odds with Berman's "Through Western Eyes."

In part three, Berman says, . . . The most important single thing that can be said of "A World Split Apart" is that it is a reading of the West through Western eyes. The early commentators had one reaction in common: they found the speech to be different from

## 106 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

their expectations. Having done so, they were ready to think that it was outside their experience and traditions. But to read his speech in scholarly tranquility is to be aware of its intellectual familiarity. Any basic library of Western thought will contain its ideas; dozens of writers from St. Augustine on would find in it some of their own thoughts . . . . But the common reader will find even more. We recognize in "A World Split Apart" the literature of our own century . . . . It is not particularly the Slavophile movement but modernism that has shown us the great artistic themes of conflict within the human mind, hollowness in our social and political ideas, and the responsibility that has been thrust on every mind capable of consciousness . . . . There are then two levels of discourse in this speech, and for the most part only one has engaged its critics. To identify Solzhenitsyn only with Russian Orthodoxy and its intellectual disabilities is to dismiss the likelihood that he participates in another tradition as well. It may be that we have confused the two kinds of criticism of the West . . . . It is critical of the West but not mordant . . . . The heart of the speech is about the nature of freedom, the constraints on freedom, and the value of freedom. Its form and some of its incidental remarks brought it more criticism than its central message warrants. Perhaps Solzhenitsyn could have learned from Auden, who thought art should teach the free man how to praise. And perhaps his adversaries should have thought of Yeats, who warned us that an intellectual hatred is the worst.

Berman's field is literature. He demonstrates extensive knowledge and versatility in his essay and I think he is right

about everything except his conclusions. To prove that someone in the Western World said similar things first is to miss the major point entirely. Berman wants to coopt Solzhenitsyn on the basis of shared problems that Western thinkers have addressed and, therefore, to give him "Western eyes." He may have universal eyes—maybe all eyes are the same—but he does not have a Western view. It seems strange—even dangerous—to assess a moral and political work on a general literary basis. This was not the basis for the viewpoints of Richard Pikes in his essay "In the Russian Intellectual Tradition." His observations reflect the major points recorded in both *Naval War College Review* articles in February 1979, particularly that of William R.D. Jones, "Solzhenitsyn and the Quest for the Holy Grail." The essays by the philosopher Sidney Hook, the historian William H. McNeil and the religious view of Michael Novak are all compelling and excellent works in and of themselves; and we owe Solzhenitsyn some thanks for providing an audience for these men by his bold words at Harvard,

The early publication of articles on Solzhenitsyn's Harvard speech by the *Naval War College Review* is vindicated by this book and other serious attentions to this major event. The big question, however, is, "Should this book be recommended?" Today there are too many books, too many comments, altogether too many words making strident demands for attention. Why should anyone, particularly a military professional, read this book in which no identifiable military mind participated?

There are, I believe, three reasons to take the hour or so required to read this book—the first time, at least. First: it is good for Americans to get acquainted with a real Russian, divorced from the emotional aura of communism (for which read Marxism, because there are many communal ideas, traditions and experiences, particularly in Russia, not

associated with a politicized Marx). Solzhenitsyn is a respectable (even venerated) Russian, persecuted and exiled by Communists. Yet, he does not choose—does not love—the “free” world. Second and related: A non-Communist Russia may not be a comfort to the Western World, if Solzhenitsyn and the right wing surging *Russity* throw off Marxism (which they view as an outmoded Western conception—foreign to Russia, and therefore, antipathetical). There can be little expectation of a lessening of tensions. In fact, antagonism to the West is essential to their existence. And finally: perhaps those who suffer as has Solzhenitsyn (and Admiral Stockdale) reach moral conclusions and dimensions beyond communication to any but their peers—of which there are only a few alive in any epoch. However, even if we cannot probe their depths, it is useful to learn that the deep is not destructive of every human spirit—quite the contrary.

W.F. LONG, JR.  
Colonel, U.S. Army (Ret.)

Clausewitz, Carl von. *Vom Kriege. Neunzehnte Auflage . . . von Prof. Dr. Werner Hahlweg*. Bonn: Duemmler, 1980. 1406pp.

*Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau*, May-June 1980, containing the proceedings of an international Clausewitzsymposium held in Hamburg in 1980.

Clausewitz-Gesellschaft, ed. *Freiheit ohne Krieg? Beitrage zur Strategie-Diskussion der Gegenwart im Spiegel der Theorie von Carl von Clausewitz*. Bonn: Duemmler, 1980. 412pp.

The three items under review dominate the literature, both policy-oriented and historical, occasioned by the 1980 bicentennial of the birth of Clausewitz.

From 1853 to 1952 the real Clausewitz was hidden from view by the serious corruption of all editions of *On*

*War* on the crucial point of civil-military relations. After World War I Rothfels supplied the first intellectual biography of Clausewitz; this was reprinted in 1980 with an epilogue by J. Niemeyer. The interwar period produced numerous examinations of the philosophical, political, and strategic aspects of *On War*. In 1952, finally, Professor Hahlweg's massive 16th edition restored the original text and signaled the start of the contemporary Clausewitz renaissance.

Hahlweg's 19th edition cited above begins with a brief new preface and acknowledgments; the preface of the 18th edition (1973) is reproduced together with its very substantial study of Clausewitz' interpretation past and present. This study examined the life and personality of Clausewitz, the genesis and emphases of *On War*, its reception by contemporaries, Moltke, Ludendorff, Seeckt, Engels, Marx, Lenin, and Stalin and his critics. A section on World War II contrasts General Beck with Hitler, touches on American attitudes, and compares the German defeats of 1918 and 1945 in Clausewitzian terms. A brief description of the first 15 editions of *On War* (1832-1937) is followed by an account of its reception before and after the two world wars in Europe including Russia, Japan, and the English-speaking world. A section on the contemporary relevance of Clausewitz ranges from guerrilla warfare to strategic theory, and surveys American, Chinese, English, German and Vietnamese analysts and commentators. Some pages on textual and editorial problems conclude this introduction of 1973.

The story is then brought up to date in another 100 pages showing the progress of Clausewitz' scholarship with respect to contemporary international relations, socialism, revolutionary movements, and Soviet perceptions. Hahlweg takes into account practically all American writings including the works of