

From: Edward Ahtel
Subject: Gulag, A History, by Anne Applebaum

Every so often, I run across a book that I feel should be mandatory reading for everyone. Such a book is "Gulag, A History" by Anne Applebaum. I find this book timely for a number of reasons. First, the world Jewish community has always has a love affair with communism. They betrayed Poland to the Bolsheviki *and, although not with the same tragic results, they betrayed America. It was a brotherhood thing. Communism was invented by and given life by Jews. They disregarded Marx's premise that religion is the opiate of the people and remain on a religious high with their Nazi like tactics regarding Palestine. Conquer, displace and resettle with your own. Looks very Nazi to me.* They were part of the American Union movement and many of the Unions of the 30s and 40s were in love with the Soviet Union and Bolshevism. The Roosevelt administration was loaded with them which maybe helps explain Franklin's kinship with uncle Joe. Vice President Henry Wallace was even invited to see the Gulags for himself and walked away completely enamored by the Bolsheviki not realizing that he had been duped into seeing something that was not so. He came back home praising communism to the heavens and equating it with American ideals.

Why am I bringing all this past tense stuff up? Because it is not so past tense. Glasnost, the wall coming down, the end of the cold war, disintegration of the Soviet Union; all of this makes us think that the Communists have now seen the light. They just changed from red to pink and now there is indication that they are starting to glow red again. I am not speaking just of Russians, but some Americans as well. Such is the strength of the ties of brotherhood. As Anne makes us aware, the British Spectator magazine recently opined that the cold war was "one of the most unnecessary conflicts of all time". American writer Gore Vidal has also described the battles of the cold war as "forty years of mindless wars which created a debt of \$5 trillion. There is no humanity in these opinions, just a mindless closing of eyes that the ideology, the pagan God they believe in cannot possibly be evil.

Anne writes of the history of the Gulags from the time of the Tsarists, through the Bolshevik revolution, Stalinism and up to the present. I was amazed that the system existed into the late 1980's. Politics in Russia is a rough profession and no one is clean, as she so brilliantly documents. Her Epilog is extremely interesting. She has visited the Gulags and finds them as something of the past. Many of the exiles who were not allowed to relocate from their place of exile form the communities of the Russian outlands. What has not changed is the Russian judicial system, courts, criminal investigations and their prison system. The judicial system is still corrupt and very political. People who recently experienced the prison system describe it in terms identical to descriptions written during the Stalinist era. Nothing has changed.

Why?

Anne has observed that the Russian people want to forget their past, and have. It is as if it is not a part of their history. She writes: "The result: half a century after the wars end, the Germans still conduct regular public disputes about victim's compensation, about

memorials, about new interpretations of Nazi history, even about whether a younger generation of Germans ought to go on shouldering the burden of Nazi crimes. Half a century after Stalin's death, there were no equivalent arguments taking place in Russia, because the memory of the past was not a living part of public discourse. Tragically, Russia's lack of interest in its past has deprived the Russians of heroes as well as victims."

How about us? Anne summarizes as follows: Our failure in the West to understand the magnitude of what happened in the Soviet Union and Central Europe doesn't, of course have the same profound implications for our way of life as it does for theirs. Our tolerance for the odd "Gulag denier" in our universities will not destroy the moral fabric of our society". However, "our understanding of what is happening now in the former Soviet Union will go on being distorted by our misunderstanding of history. Again, if we really knew what Stalin did to the Chechens, and if we felt that it was a terrible crime against the Chechen nation, it is not only Vladimir Putin who would be unable to do the same terrible things to them now, but we also would be unable to sit back and watch with equal equanimity". Like in Roosevelt's time, we see them as partners, partners in the war against terrorism. Again, our problem is that we do not understand who is the terrorist.

I think Anne's book is timely. We recently celebrated an anniversary of the passing of Senator McCarthy. McCarthy was not chasing ghosts. We had a serious problem in America and unfortunately it was mostly associated with the American Jewish community. McCarthy's problem was he was over zealous. This, plus the great control the Jewish community had over the American media was his undoing. That control still exists. Just ask any politician if he dare talk about or treat Palestinians favorably. We now have another serious problem in America.

On a positive note, I see that some people are taking up the McCarthy banner to give balance to that episode. This is happening much to the dismay of the Jewish community because I am already seeing a media effort to put a negative face on this effort.

On another positive note, I find Anne's book doubly interesting because she is Jewish, but writes honestly. In Russia, Jews were sometimes perpetrators as well as victims which may explain why they never take an equivalent position with Russia like they do with Germany. She paints everyone with an honest brush. As I had stated earlier, this is a book that should be made mandatory reading. I hope I have convinced you.

Warmest Regards To All,