

The War on Meaning

The Soviet destruction of truth lives on in the propaganda of Iran, Hamas, and their Western apologists.

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The monstrous system of terror set up by Lenin and perfected by Stalin was the granite foundation of the Soviet state. The tsars had used Siberian exile and death as well and it had controls over the press. But their aims in the censorship were narrow. The greatest proof of that is the evidence of some of the greatest works of literature ever written. There is no more challenging book in European literature than *The Brothers Karamazov*, written with a dedication to uncovering the truth of the human spirit that still strikes the reader as fearsome and electric.

For all their horrible faults, the tsars very consciously set religion at the center of their kingdom. However much their behavior horribly belied the holiness they claimed to seek, their empire was still to them Holy Russia. And the biblical tradition to which they professed has at its core the godliness of words and the truth they are meant to convey.

In a prayer said each morning in the ancient Jewish liturgy, the worshipper declares: “Blessed is the One who spoke and the world came to be.” The language of the prayer reflects the Genesis story of creation, which writes of the world being created through the word of God: “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” The Psalmist too testifies that the

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connection of God's speech with the universe is everlasting: "Forever, O God, Your word stands within the heavens"; "The heavens declare the glory of God." This word, taught the 18th century master Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, is what continuously keeps the heavens and the universe existing. We might say today that this is just like the whole world playing out on our video screens, which is continuously being recreated by a constant flow of coherent energy.

This connection of language and being, of meaning and of the world, is intrinsic to the very language of Scripture. The Hebrew word for "word" and for "thing" is the same: *davar*. There is an internal and permanent connection between the material actuality of the world and meaning. Coming from the One God who is source of both matter and *logos*, one could hardly expect the various ruptures of duality that we experience such as mind/body, intellect/emotion, or matter/spirit could ever represent a final unified truth.

But the Soviet system, inaugurated by Vladimir Lenin and brought to its full, horrific expression under Joseph Stalin, sought not merely to command behavior but to seize control of meaning itself. The problem was stark: how to uproot belief in the deepest truths from a people formed by faith in the God of the Bible? The Communist answer was relentless. They deployed every form of external pressure — coercion, surveillance, punishment — not only to control individuals from without, but to compel them to betray, within themselves, the very truths they knew to be real.

Leszek Kołakowski was educated in the underground during the Nazi occupation of Poland. He became an orthodox Communist, which then meant a Stalinist, for in that part of the world, it was Stalin who led the great fight against Hitler that bled white the mighty Nazi armies. But his own dedicated seeking of truth and commitment to a transcendent cause brought him hard up against the demonic truth at the core of Stalinism. He began to write about it with such a depth of knowledge and such courage that he became an enemy of the state. In the late 60s, he was expelled from the Party, fired from his university professorship, and allowed to leave Poland for the West. Welcomed to All Souls College at Oxford, he there wrote several works, including a magisterial three-volume history of Marxism.

In that history, Kołakowski describes the core process of subversion of language and its meaning in which the people of the state are coerced to become partners in their own subversion.

The object of the system was to create a dual consciousness. At public meetings, and even in private conversations, citizens were obliged to repeat in ritual fashion grotesque falsehoods about themselves, the world, and the Soviet Union, and at the same time to keep silent about things they knew very well, not only because they were terrorized but because the incessant repetition of falsehoods which they knew to be such made them accomplices in the campaign of lies inculcated by the party and state.

What underlay all of this was the Marxist belief that reality is entirely material and that therefore meaning is secondary at best, and always entirely malleable to the Party. Words therefore are unrelated to reality and may be applied at will. Concepts of internal truth, inner meaning, principles, and whatever else the Party's leader might condemn, were all dismissed as bourgeois metaphysical mind games, meant only to control the workers and keep them from the workers' paradise. And in the midst of constant want, fear of enslavement, torture, starvation, and execution, Stalin, the ex-seminarian, found the way to force people to defy apparent truth more successfully than the *auto-da-fes* of the Inquisition.

From Kołakowski:

Half-starved people, lacking the bare necessities of life, attended meetings at which they repeated the government's lies about how well off they were, and in a bizarre way they half-believed what they were saying. They all knew what it was "right" to say, i.e. what was demanded of them, and in a curious way they confused this "rightness" with truth. Truth, they knew, was a party matter, and therefore lies became true even if they contradicted the plain facts of experience. The condition of thus living in two separate worlds at once was one of the most remarkable achievements of the Stalinist system.

The phantasmagoric slaughter of World War I, bleeding the continent white and destroying the inner faith in European civilization and its foundations, was the necessary preparation for this modern Frankenstein substitute for the old faith. Like faith, it affirmed a reality at odds with the world of experience.

The Western faith tradition has stood at its core for the unity of faith and reason. But the cost of admission to the Leninist/Stalinist promise of paradise was the surrender of any hope that faith and reason could ever be made whole. It was a surrender to a metaphysics of meaninglessness that would be justified by the coerced acceptance of the tawdry materiality realities of the State as paradise regained. Instead of a God who cannot be fully grasped because His being is so great, there reigned instead a black hole in which all was to be crushed into eternal indistinct nothingness, beyond the pale of ever being known. As put by another person who knew the Stalinist world from the inside, George Orwell, even the reality of time, with an unchangeable past, was dissolved:

The past, he reflected, had not merely been altered, it had been actually destroyed. For how could you establish even the most obvious fact when there existed no record of your own memory?

While Stalin is long gone, the malignancy he set loose is still causing havoc. It always has that black hole of meaninglessness at its core, and that crushing oblivion of meaninglessness is always marketed as the divine plenum of all meaning. Always it aims at debunking any accountability to any idea or standard not of its own device. Always, those who set it loose employ whatever violence they can get away with to achieve their goals and to keep their power. We are only beginning to assess the untold damage done to our own culture by the covert conversionary project of the American academy of hybridizing Franz Fanon's race-based Marxism with the literary cynicism of Deconstructionism.

Under Obama, this malignancy was mainstreamed into our politics. The great foreign policy endeavor of his eight years in office was the deconstruction of the moral case against

the metastasizing murderous ideology of the Khomeinist Iranian regime and the project of allowing a smooth transition to normalizing its becoming a nuclear power. This double undercutting of Israel and the United States was long a goal of the Soviet regime, ever since young socialist Israel decided not to toe the Stalinist line.

The project reeks of Stalinism, however pleasant the face of the seemingly likeable politicians who front it. The project is subverting the mind so that people convince themselves that what they know of as lies are true. The key to that is the subversion of language itself. Like anything other than stark, dumb matter, the Stalinist of then and now believes that language is infinitely malleable and its only true reality is to serve the needs of the Party/State.

At the end of World War II, Nazism was precisely defined and extremely powerful — it was the epitome of evil, the monstrous movement that nearly pulled down all of civilization and left tens of millions dead. Because Hitler attacked him, Stalin joined the fight, and Stalin and the West fought and defeated Hitler together. All were at one in fighting and defeating this evil.

Stalin's bad faith after the war broke up the alliance, and immediately, as bad-faith people do, he tried to pin the blame for the breakup on the West. With increasing frequency and vituperation, Stalin's regime claimed that America and Britain were the new Nazis and that is why there was no idyllic peace after Germany's defeat.

This same trope began to be applied to Israel as it settled into the Western camp. In Moscow, Soviets convened a new organization to fight Israel, the PLO, and got Egyptian-born Yassir Arafat to lead it. To counter Israel's escape from extermination at the hands of Egypt in the Six Day War, the USSR coordinated a massive propaganda campaign tarring Israel as racist and as the true Nazis, mustering a UN vote that condemned Zionism as racism. And in the next step, they set loose what became a world-wide campaign which appropriated words designating the universally condemned evil of which Jews had been the intended central victim and employed those words to delegitimize the Jewish

commonwealth. The plan is to make the world partners in their intended crime, which for the mullahs of Iran is summed up in a phrase Hitler would have approved: “Death to Israel.”

Izabella Tabarovsky pointed out in a 2024 *Quillette* article that the phrases “Genocide Israeli style,” “Zionist-engineered genocide,” and “the ‘final solution’ of the Palestinian question” all appear in “Zionist Count on Terror,” a 1984 pamphlet published by Moscow. Cartoons that are dead ringers for the vile pictorial slurs of the Nazi rag *Der Sturmer* were generated throughout the Party press and deployed in the campaign.

Tabarovsky writes:

These calumnies will be familiar to anyone who has paid attention to the rhetoric that exploded in progressive quarters in the wake of October 7 — the day Hamas raped, tortured, slaughtered, and pillaged its way through Israel’s southern kibbutzim. Isn’t this 40-year-old Soviet propaganda pamphlet speaking the language of today’s progressives? It is. Or to be more precise: today’s progressives are speaking the language of Soviet propaganda. The most extraordinary feature of the anti-Israel rhetoric flooding the West today is the extent to which it reproduces the motifs, tropes, slogans, and explanatory logic of late-Soviet communist ideology.

With American culture already weakened by the onslaught of Marxist-inflected Deconstructionism, large swathes of the American professoriate have successfully passed on this classic Stalinist inversion of reality as the final truth, with all previous ideas being condemned as counterrevolutionary narratives of oppression.

And just as with the Leninist/Stalinist ideology that originated this method, behind it all lurks coercion and terror, for not being grounded in truth, their only constancy in the human soul is from external coercive force. Look at any demonstration for the Jew-hating cause and there always be the threat of every kind of coercion that they can plausibly bring to bear — here in America, where even their foul screeds enjoy Constitutional protection.

At the core of it all is the metaphysical belief — for the Communist disavowal of metaphysics turns out to be another lie — that there is no intrinsic meaning to anything.

Brute matter only is real, and it is void of any meaning except those we can impose on it.

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