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The costs of abstraction

by [Anthony Daniels](#)

On the intellectual irresponsibility of Soviet sympathizers.

One of the most extraordinary episodes in the intellectual history of the twentieth century—if, indeed, something that lasted half a century or more can properly be called an episode—is the moral and sometimes material support given by much of the western intelligentsia to the Soviet tyranny, a tyranny that made all previous tyrannies seem relaxed, liberal, and almost amateurish by comparison. Men who found the slightest circumscription of their own freedom intolerable raised hosannas to the most systematic and concerted abrogation of personal liberty yet attempted; many were those who strained at gnats to swallow a camel.

No doubt the explanation for this phenomenon is psychologically and sociologically complex. A commonly cited factor that supposedly contributed to it was ignorance of the real situation obtaining in the Soviet Union: intellectuals were therefore able to project on to t ...

Anthony Daniels's most recent book is *In Praise of Prejudice* (Encounter Books).

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