

The New Criterion

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In praise of “Survey”

On Survey: A Journal of East & West Studies.

Survey: A Journal of East & West Studies, which was founded in Britain by the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the 1950s, is suspending publication. This is unhappy news for those readers the world over—largely scholars, intellectuals, and specialists in Soviet and Eastern European affairs, and never great in number—who had learned over the years to rely upon its expert analyses of developments in the Communist world and its equally important documentation of Western responses to those developments. In that sometimes bizarre intellectual territory that came to be known as Sovietology, *Survey* could always be counted on to illuminate the difficult truths that so many others—not excluding some of the most renowned authors in the field—either knowingly concealed or lacked the wit to discern.

The unpleasant truth is, at the height of the Cold War—no less than in the worst year of the Great Terror in the 1930s—there was much lying in the West about Stalin and the nature of the Soviet regime. Writers who earned illustrious international reputations as authorities on Soviet history and politics—among them, E.H. Carr in his multi-volume *History of Soviet Russia*, Isaac Deutscher in his biographies of Stalin and Trotsky, and Alexander Werth both in his regular dispatches to *The New Statesman* in London and *The Nation* in New York and in his many books about the USSR—systematically misrepresented the factions and served eager apologists for the Soviet tyranny; and they have not lacked successors of similar disposition and eminence down to our own day.

It was precisely to combat such widespread political mystification that *Survey* was founded in the Fifties, and no publication in the world has carried out this mission with a more exemplary record of scholarly probity and moral clarity. Both its founding editor, Walter Z. Laqueur, and the editor who has guided *Survey's* course in more recent years, Leopold Labedz, are distinguished scholars and gifted writers who have themselves made important contributions to our knowledge of Communist and Soviet affairs—and much else. Learned in several fields and commanding many languages, and knowing something from personal experience about the realities of totalitarianism in our time, they brilliantly succeeded in marshaling a good many other specialist writers in the campaign to establish the truth about a subject that was so often fictionalized in the press, in the

academy, and in the foreign offices of a good many Western nations.

They were not always thanked for this effort, either—for it was one of the peculiarities of the Cold War that the West, which represented the side of truth, freedom, and justice, was from first to last under unremitting attack from a significant number of its own writers, artists, editors, journalists, academics, scientists, et al., who continued year after year, decade after decade, to support the Communist cause and to identify the Western democracies as the hated enemies of "progressive" mankind. Indeed, fashionable opinion in the West was mainly of this *gauchiste* persuasion; and where neither illusions about nor connivance with Soviet power shaped opinion, a certain element of moral cowardice in the face of that power certainly did.

The history of this Western surrender to Soviet myth—and to the notion that Communism, whatever its evils and failures, somehow remained an ideal to which "progressives" should remain loyal—was also an integral part of the intellectual agenda that *Survey* set for itself. Certain numbers of the magazine that were mainly devoted to this subject—Number 41 (April 1962), on "The Western Image of the Soviet Union 1917-1962", with its studies of, among much else, the Webbs' *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization*, the Left Book Club, and press accounts of the Moscow Trials; and number 128/129 (March 1988), a special issue, edited by Melvin J. Lasky, that collected Mr. Labedz's principal essays under the title of "The Use & Abuse of Sovietology", are classics of contemporary historical literature.

With the end of the Cold War, in which the West's resistance to Communism has proved to be triumphant and its harsh moral judgment of Soviet totalitarianism completely vindicated, a vast quantity of new historical research and intellectual analysis is certain to be produced on both sides of the now dismantled Iron Curtain. When these new histories of the Cold War come to be written—and those written in the East, we predict, will be even tougher in their judgment of our Western "progressives" than we have been—*Survey* is assured of an honored place, both as a source of important information and as a model of scholarship in the service of moral intelligence.

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